OTHER PEOPLE'S DAUGHTERS

ELEANOR ROWLAND WEMBRIDGE

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OTHER PEOPLE'S DAUGHTERS

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By

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TO

ELIZABETH McLELLAN ROWLAND

WHOSE DAUGHTER

IT IS MY GREAT PRIVILEGE TO BE

PREFACE

THE following sketches of girls, their sweethearts and their families, all of whom have found living in a complex world a somewhat difficult matter, are not offered merely as records of fact, nor as bits of life disguised as fiction, although they are both of these. They are preëminently an experimental attempt on the part of one interested, not only in the human drama, but in the science of psychology, to study, by a kind of transplanted laboratory method, emotional phenomena which by the nature of the case can never be caught, held, and analyzed in the cool atmosphere of the laboratory. To the chemist and the physicist with their proud boast of measurable elements, the science of psychology must ever appear, and in reality is, inexact. The psychologist, interested in events outside the laboratory as well as in, is rather in the position of that other scientist of later days, the geographer. Neither one can capture or buy at wholesale his continents or his tides, his loves or his hates, and measure them under a quiet microscope. Each must rather, with

whatever pains, travel to his torrents, whether of water or of wrath, and his frozen mountains, whether of ice or of baffled instinct, and must study them where they are. But however toilsome the method, and incapable as are both explorers of telling what they find in the precise terms of the exact sciences, neither one would sacrifice the richness of his field, the wild tangles of the outer or the inner world, for the greater finesse of the physicist's scales, or the test-tubes of the chemist, which froth and change color at his convenience over his quiet table.

The purpose of these stories is, therefore, in ever so inadequate a way, to bring the complex inner life of a few inarticulate people before the student of human behavior, not merely as the fiction writer who very rightly has no object other than his art, nor wholly as a dispassionate recorder of events whose report is studiously purged of the emotion of which he writes. Both may be more valuable things to do, but they have been done many times, and I have not tried them here. These sketches are rather the experimental attempts of a would-be human geographer to display and to impress upon his audience by moving-pictures, rather than by statistics, the deserts, the warped vegetation, and the volcanoes which he

has witnessed. The psychological insets correspond to the geographer's altitudes, his soundings, and his barometric charts. But in the main he leaves his pictures wholly as fact, and if possible partly of beauty, to tell their own story. And so do I.

ELEANOR ROWLAND WEMBRIDGE

CLEVELAND, OHIO
January 15, 1926

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OTHER PEOPLE'S DAUGHTERS

I

THE BOOKKEEPER

THE BOOKKEEPER

'Behavior pattern' is a term often applied by psychologists to the system of habits and ways of thinking which make up the life of any individual or group. These habits become so interrelated with each other that when some of them are necessarily changed because of a complete change of environment, the rest of them tend to be shaken up in sympathy. The individual at such a time is often temporarily off his guard, and ways of acting which would be impossible to fit into the old behavior pattern, in the old environment, become possible in the new.

All young people are in particular need of supervision, whenever their life habits shift from old grooves into new.

OTHER PEOPLE'S DAUGHTERS

I

THE BOOKKEEPER

NORMA came from East Eden where she graduated from high school in a white organdie dress, and sang a duet with the minister's son at the class reception. She had been a careful, conscientious student, and for two years since her graduation she had been a clerk and bookkeeper in her uncle's hardware store. But Norma was not satisfied. She was an ambitious girl, and dreamed long dreams, chief of which was the dream of going to the city to make her way in some larger business enterprise than the selling of shears to country housewives, and hoes and lawn-mowers to their husbands.

So Norma came to the city, and, as if by Fate's appointment, she found herself, at her daily lunch-counter, seated next to Luman, a six-foot mining man from Denver. Luman was handsome and talkative. He easily scraped acquaintance with the pleasant-looking girl whom he saw every

noon, and Norma listened to his stories with fascination.

Although a small-town girl reared to housewifely interests, she was, by nature, a statistician. She loved figures and the adding and subtracting of them. The larger the better. She had been the only girl in high school who was not afraid of partial payments and percentage, and she attacked a page of figures, and even the stock quotations in the morning paper, like a dish of sweet morsels. So to have a handsome stranger talk finance to her all through the lunch hour, and to have these figures stand for gold mines instead of kegs of nails, was her idea of glory and romance. The whole affair entertained Luman enormously. He had been accustomed to women more than ready to share the contents of his gold mines. But this absorbed little bookkeeper, with her thirst for figures, regardless of whose bankbook they adorned, was a new type. He would put up various financial schemes to her, and roar with laughter when she put her finger on their weaknesses. 'You sure would make a good pardner for a mining man,' he chuckled. 'I'd like to see your face if some of the boys tried to sell you a wildcat proposition.'

All of this put Norma into a glow of happiness.

Within a week she had decided that she had always meant to marry a Westerner, and that probably six bridesmaids would be more effective than four. Luman had a car, and he got into the way of picking up Norma after office hours and taking her off for dinner and a drive through the parks and along the river-front. He even persuaded her to go to the public amusement grounds with him, although this was a radical proceeding for Norma, and she clung to him with a fearful joy on her first 'witching waves' and 'shoot the chutes.' By July Luman asked Norma to marry him, and she had agreed with the greatest enthusiasm. She was more than ready to marry him; in fact, it had not crossed her mind that she would do anything else. She wanted to marry him at once in the East Eden Church, but, since he did not seem to relish that idea, she would have married him any day, any time, anywhere. That was how she felt about it. She expected to drive up to a minister's without delay, and for the life of her she could not see what they were waiting for. Being naturally systematic, as well as much in love, she fretted a good deal over the delay. But Luman hesitated, and finally announced that he must go to Denver. Business was not what it should be. He would go first, and then would send for her. When she

heard of this, she hinted and then begged outright to go with him, but he said that it was impossible. Then with no more ado, he simply left, with no forwarding address.

For a few weeks Norma went to her office as before. But it was a long hot walk, she was not well, and so thoroughly distressed and miserable, that she was almost frantic. All of this had not escaped the sharp eyes of Mrs. Neilson, the small blonde wife of a local coal-dealer, who had been rooming temporarily at the same house with Norma. Mrs. Neilson was a young woman who said little, but who saw a good deal. Her stay at the rooming-house had been chiefly devoted to watching Norma and Luman in their love-making. She had been fairly certain that all was not well even before he left. Now there could be no mistaking that there was trouble. Her room was adjacent to Norma's and she heard her crying every night much too long and much too desperately to be merely lonesome for her lover.

One evening she listened to her as long as she could bear it, and then she tapped on Norma's door. Getting no answer, she walked in, and sat down on the bed beside the sobbing girl. 'You can do these things if you are small enough,' she explained to her husband. 'If you are big, they

throw you out. I'm too small to kick.' So she sat on the bed and put her hand on Norma's shoulder. 'Say, kid,' she remarked, 'I know what's wrong. That guy has gone off and left you in trouble. Hard luck, but there's no use in crying so loud you wake the whole house. Cheer up. You're not the first one. I'll get you a job with my man, and see you through' — and with no more ado (she being twenty and Norma eighteen) she lay down beside her, and they went to sleep.

Tim, the coal-dealer, was an indulgent husband, his wife being a very recent acquisition, and he agreed to take Norma into his office to settle his books. 'The Lord knows they need it,' he said with a large laugh. So Norma was established and boarded with them next door. Mrs. Tim, whose talents lay in quite other lines from those of balancing figures, had a silent but inordinate respect for Norma's powers. She often dropped in at the office and watched Norma vibrating between her ledgers and the safe, and knitting her brows over the cash-box. 'Gosh, kid!' would be her brief comment, and with a pat on the shoulder, she would walk out again. Norma was not wholly easy to deal with at this period. If any one recalls how the young soldier patients used to look in the hospital amputation wards, as they puffed their

cigarettes and stared straight in front of them, they will know how Norma looked. Every young veteran with his crutch beside him was thinking, 'I, the best dancer in town, am going to be a cripple, a legless man whom the girls will pity for ever and ever.' In the same way, as soon as Norma's books balanced, the light in her eyes died out, and she sat in Mrs. Neilson's parlor with the same stare. Her thoughts ran like a windmill, 'I, a member of the church, am a bad girl. It's happened to me. I, with a fatherless baby like the poorhouse women.' The name for this state of mind and for the expression which it stamps upon the face is — Shock. And shock does not make a a person easy to deal with. Sometimes Mrs. Neilson would cry — 'Cut it, kid, you give me the jumps,' and would drag her to the movie. But the plots were often so distressingly similar to Norma's own drama, that her friend was obliged to add, 'Let's beat it, kid,' and drag her home again.

And when the baby was finally born and died within a few days, Norma was still harder to deal with. For she was sorry the baby died, but not sorry enough, and sorry because she was not as sorry as she ought to be, and altogether was so torn between the feelings which she did and did

not have, that Mrs. Neilson, whose theology was of a most sketchy order, had occasion more than once to murmur, 'Gosh, you church members!'

In the meantime Mrs. Neilson had got Norma's old position back for her, since it paid much better wages than Tim could afford. And with a cheerful disregard of truth she had told such a circumstantial account of Norma's appendicitis, that the other girls in the office suspected nothing. Norma was apparently just where she was before, except that, as all the stenographers agreed, 'An appendix does pull down your looks.'

Norma grimly declined to discuss her symptoms with the other appendix victims, but Mrs. Neilson, so seldom talkative, could do a good job when she set about it, and no lies were necessary on Norma's part. 'No one could fool *me* with a tale like that,' mused Mrs. Neilson, 'but I've bluffed that darn office to a fare-ye-well.'

Perhaps the most striking feature of the whole situation was the unlimited confidence which Norma and Mrs. Neilson placed in one another, although each of them belonged to a type of which the other fundamentally disapproved. Norma had never supposed such heathen as Mrs. Neilson existed outside of darkest Africa. In vain could

she extract from her any inkling as to her religious convictions, or even as to her preferences. Mrs. Tim asserted that she had never been in a church except when her uncle got married. 'But he was married in a swell church all right,' she boasted. 'But what kind,' pleaded Norma, 'Catholic or Protestant?' 'Brick,' said Mrs. Neilson; and further than that, she either could not, or would not go. On the other hand Mrs. Neilson would say pleasantly to Norma, 'You know, you prunes from Hickville, I never could *see* you before; you just weren't on my map.' Yet, despite the fact that her cynical distrust of most women amounted almost to a mania, she never doubted one least detail of Norma's story. When Tim, in his large masculine way, observed that maybe Norma hadn't been quite as innocent as she made herself out, he got such a piece of his wife's mind that he stared at her in surprise. 'Well, well. Maybe she was, maybe she was,' he recanted hastily, reflecting that it was useless to try to fathom his wife's likes and dislikes.

As it turned out, the implicit confidence which the two girls had in each other made them excellent partners, capable of acting quickly in an emergency. Neither of them ever questioned the good faith or the good judgment of the other.

They acted with the speed and accuracy of acrobatic partners on adjoining trapezes.

Mrs. Neilson had received from Norma a most accurate description of her love affair. As she listened to it she nodded knowingly. 'Big flashy guy and a country kid' — and although Norma winced a little at being compressed into so brief a formula, she acknowledged its accuracy. One day as they rode together in the trolley, there was a block in the traffic which held up not only the car in which they rode, but pedestrians as well. When Mrs. Neilson turned to make an impatient remark to her companion, she saw her rigidly staring with an absolutely bloodless face out of the window, and, following her glance, she saw on which figure it was focussed.

With the speed of a cat, she gripped Norma by the arm, and started to drag her from the car. As she afterward explained — 'How was I sure it was him? How long do you *have* to look at a donkey to see him?' (and she didn't say donkey, either, she used another word). 'You go make a date with him for noon at Tim's office,' she commanded in a whisper. 'I'll call the police,' and she flew to the nearest telephone into which she hurled the words: 'Come to Tim Neilson's coal office at noon and pinch a masher.'

As for Luman, now that a year had passed with no trouble resulting from his flirtation, it had seemed safe to come back. He had no fears of any complications with Norma. In fact, the whole matter had slipped into the background of his mind, so that the sudden apparition of her pale face staring at him from the crowd, for an instant almost drove the blood from his own cheek. He stopped to talk with her because he dared do nothing else. He could not have a crazy woman hunting him up at his hotel or dogging his footsteps on the streets, and she looked perfectly capable of doing either. As a matter of fact, she had no idea what she was doing. She automatically repeated the words which Mrs. Neilson had put into her mouth, and she stared at Luman like a death-mask, only because once having fixed her eyes upon his face, she did not know how to take them off again. In the meantime the traffic had started on, and Mrs. Neilson was at Norma's elbow to pilot her back to the car. Norma had been overtaken by a nervous chill, and her teeth were chattering like sleet against a window. Her friend took a grim satisfaction in leading the shaking girl close to the traffic policeman, so that he might see her face, hear her teeth rattle, and draw his own conclusions. Being a man of experi-

ence, he drew them, and exchanged a comprehending glance with what he afterwards described as the 'little blonde wildcat.' Then he did not remove his gaze from the retreating Luman until the tall Stetson hat was lost in the distance.

Norma was finally dragged into Tim's office and propped into a chair. Her friend was determined that Luman should not be stalking the streets of her city unless Norma was by his side. If that could not be, let him take to the road 'like the rest of the dirty bums,' she said. It was soon clear that Norma could not be depended upon to do or to say anything rational. She evidently had not the least idea of what was being said to her, and still less capacity to say anything for herself. Mrs. Neilson fairly shook her with impatience, then like a shrewd general, she turned defeat into victory. 'Well, if you've gone crazy, sit there and gibber,' she said. 'I don't know but it shows off what he done to you more than anything you could say. After all, the movie actresses don't *talk*,' she commented to herself, 'and they get it across.' So she patted Norma on the back, and stood by the window waiting for Luman, who presently arrived. When he saw three figures where he had expected to see but one, he realized that something serious was being staged, and

turned to leave. But his exit was prevented by three policemen, one of whom remarked, 'That's him, all right.'

As Luman turned again to enter the room, Norma rose and started toward him. She had thought of him constantly for over a year. His face had been in her thoughts by day and in her dreams by night. She was at present in such a thoroughly distracted state that she had entirely forgotten the circumstances under which they were meeting after so long a separation. She could hold but one idea in her mind, and that was, that Luman was here. He had come back as she had dreamed a thousand times.

Norma had never been a beauty, and what good looks she had, had been sadly impaired by her trouble. But as she walked toward Luman, her face flushed, her eyes unnaturally bright, her lips half parted, her whole bearing transfigured by her absolute devotion, she dominated the room with her presence. Like a radiant sleep-walker, she moved toward Luman, but Luman did not move to meet her. Instead he backed away until the policeman barred his passage. Then he stood glaring past her with stony eyes. Norma drew closer to him with her hands outstretched, but Luman stared at her without a change of expres-

sion. Then his voice broke the silence, 'I never knew the woman,' he said slowly and deliberately.

At first Norma hardly seemed to understand him. Then the brutality of his words hit her like a blow between the eyes. She staggered back against the filing-cases, the vividness in her face and bearing quenched in an instant. The live coals in her eyes turned to cinders. She looked almost idiotic. In the moment of stillness following his denial, the unconscious plagiarism of his words was intensified by the faint crowing of one of Tim's roosters in the yard outside.

But there was one moment of stillness only. Then the floodgates of Mrs. Neilson's indignation broke loose. She strode over to Luman, her face blazing with scorn and contempt, and stood in front of him. 'You never knew her, you say? You never saw her before? She *looks* like a girl who has just seen you for the first time, don't she? You come here, you sneak, you hound, you — you MAN,' in an ascending climax of abuse, and she pointed toward the next room. Luman hesitated a moment, then he preceded her through the door like her prisoner. Tim looked after them in alarm. But his alarm was not for his wife. He was genuinely concerned for what his diminutive wife might do to this hulk of a man. 'Go easy, kid,' he

called after her. But the slam which she gave the door did not indicate that his advice was to be heeded.

Luman and Norma's avenger were closeted together for nearly half an hour. Then the door opened, and Tim's wife, flushed with triumph, marched out of the room with her head in the air. Behind her stumbled the figure of Luman, a sorry copy of what he had been when he went in. His face was aflame and his eyes were red. He had placed his wide felt hat on his head for quick departure, but had then forgotten it, and its unsteady perch pushed back from his forehead, gave him almost a clownish aspect. When he reached the middle of the room, Mrs. Neilson stopped him, and standing at one side proceeded to demonstrate him as if he had been a freak in a side show. 'He has a bad memory, this guy,' she said. 'He forgot that he knew Norma, but his memory is coming back and he is remembering a lot more things that he had forgotten, too. Four! A wife and three children. Queer how they'd slipped his mind. He can't remember when he left the "Pen" last either, says he can't remember ever being there, but that'll come back to him, too, I guess, if he thinks long enough.' Then from contempt her voice changed to irony. In the smoothest and

most silky tones she purred to Norma, 'But it's all right, girlie. He says he'll give you a nice big check. How about a swell fur coat or a string of pearls? That'll make it all right, won't it, dearie?' Norma made no verbal answer, but she shook her head violently from side to side, without raising it from her arms.

'What? She don't want a check?' cried Mrs. Neilson in mock amazement. 'She must be crazy. Here is a man who made love to her, and then insulted her, and she says she don't want his money. Well, take a good look at her,' she commanded Luman. 'That's one girl who didn't make love to you for cash. You're not likely ever to see another. I hope the rest of them have sense enough to wreck your bank account. I'd make her do it,' she added to the others, 'if I thought he had one — the poor boob. But I'll bet he's in debt for that swell hat.' Luman said nothing to all this, and the other men were equally at a loss what to do next. If Luman had demonstrated to Mrs. Neilson's satisfaction that he could not marry Norma, and if Norma refused to take a money settlement, there seemed to be nothing to do with the man but to let him go. They did not venture, however, to decide this for themselves. But when Mrs. Neilson suddenly stopped glaring at her captive

and bent over Norma with her cheek against her friend's hair, the police sergeant inquired respectfully what she wanted them to do next. She called over her shoulder, 'I don't care what you do with him. Throw him to the cat' — and then to their astonishment she began to cry, murmuring over and over into Norma's ear, 'Poor kid, it's a darn shame. They ain't worth it, Norm', they ain't worth it.'

The encounter with Luman had at least the merit of being decisive. Since Norma no longer took comfort in her dream world, she came back to a world of fact, and took notice of what was going on around her. She attended church regularly, from which in due time a slender blond young man used to accompany her home in the evening. Mrs. Neilson was enormously interested in this development. Although she took no risks of saying the wrong thing to Norma, to Tim she remarked, 'He looks like a sap, but I guess it's all right this time. This guy'll stand without hitching.' It was not fair to George to call him a sap. Small and blond he undoubtedly was, but he was no fool. He had come from a town like East Eden, and Norma seemed to him like the girls at home. He ran a Ford repair shop, and Norma had first

attracted him by the ready way in which she grasped the problems of his business. Her natural business imagination reveled in managing his affairs as it had dreamed over Luman's speculations. She often felt that she could make something out of George's shop, although she had no illusions that she could make anything out of George. One evening on the way home from church George asked her to marry him. He felt very tender and sentimental in the moonlight. He was sure that Norma was the smartest and most desirable girl whom he had ever known, all of which he told her, shyly, but with genuine feeling. Norma stood still in the path while he talked, and he could feel her arm growing rigid under his. Then she said, 'I'm not in love with you, George, but I couldn't marry you if I were. I've been a bad girl. I was going to get married once, but the man went off and left me because he had a wife. And then I had a baby. And it's dead. There, now you know.' And with that she started off down the path by herself. But George hurried after her and gripped her again by the arm. He made her turn around and face him. It had not been easy for him to listen to this confession hurled at him with no warning, and from a girl like Norma. As a rule he did not think

quickly and it took him some time to make up his mind. But in this moral emergency he showed a decision which he lacked in ordinary matters, and he rose to the occasion at once. That was what made the impression on Norma. 'Never mind it, Norma,' he said, looking her in the eyes, as she now realized that Luman had never done. 'I'd marry you if you were a widow. And the way I look at it, it's about the same thing. You lost your first husband the same as if you'd been married to him, and I want to be your second. You won't lose me.' The dignity and straightforwardness of this immediate grasping of the situation took Norma's breath away. His moral integrity eclipsed his physical and social shortcomings. Norma accepted him because she had no emotional weapons left with which to combat such kindness. And so they were engaged.

Curiously enough, although Norma's thoughts were much more on George's business than on her own, there was nothing about him that irritated her so much as to hear him talk about it. His ideas of money were so inadequate. His caution allowed him to venture no farther than an account at the savings bank, 'and what you really would like to do,' she sniffed, 'is to tie it up every Saturday night, and hide it in the mattress.' At such

periods of exasperation she would protest to Mrs. Neilson that she never could go through with it. 'I just can't stand having such a dumb-bell around,' she scolded. But her wise friend would urge, 'Sit tight, dearie. There's something wrong with *all* of them. It might as well be that as something worse.' And then Norma would remember how George's face had looked in the moonlight when she told him her story, and she would realize that she had no power within her to send him from her now, even if she had really wanted to.

So the wedding was set for September, and, of course, the girls at the office were deeply interested and eager for details, of which Norma volunteered but few.

'She acts kind of funny for an engaged girl,' said the head stenographer, who was also engaged and behaved quite differently. 'You would think it was her funeral and not her wedding she was going to. But then she always has been kind of queer.' So they got her a bunch of flowers and a handsome cut-glass dish, and the chief clerk, who was considered quite a joker, made the presentation speech.

The burden of his remarks was to the effect that the great thing nowadays, was not to get a man,

but to *keep* him. 'Let me tell you, Miss Norma, he went on, warming to his theme, as the giggles and 'You've-said-its' of the girls testified that his audience was with him — 'Let me tell you that the big idea is to hang on to 'em. I've never seen your young man, but if he is too showy, you'd better watch out. Handsome is as handsome does, and unless you're thinking of moving to Utah, be sure he hasn't got a wife already.' With these graceful and much-applauded words, he presented the flowers and the cut-glass dish. Norma received them with a very fixed smile, which she knew was mechanical, but which she was unable to remove. Neither could she say anything. The kind-hearted girls, touched by the fact that she seemed so deeply moved by their gift, chattered volubly so that her silence might not be noticed. When the attention had turned a little from herself, Norma escaped from the group and did not return.

Half an hour afterward, when all the girls were back at their typewriters, the little filing clerk whispered to the head stenographer: 'It's funny how excited Norma is over her wedding. I just went out to the coat-room to get my handkerchief and there was Norma standing with her head against the wall, and she was crying something

awful. She wouldn't let me do anything. She said she'd be all right, that she was only nervous. But maybe her fella don't treat her right, or something,' she added doubtfully. 'No, I don't believe it's that,' said the head stenographer, who was considered an authority on these matters. 'They say he's a real steady fella. You'd know that sort would be the only kind that a quiet girl like Norma would look at — or who would look at her,' she added in a slightly patronizing voice. 'She was just upset over our surprising her with that expensive present. You could see that it made her real nervous. She felt it a lot. She's a nervous girl anyhow,' she added. 'I've noticed that she's never been the same since she had the appendicitis.'

II
THE ALIAS

THE ALIAS

Daydreams are the imaginary fulfillment of wishes. There is a tendency, exceptionally strong in early life, but sometimes lasting into maturity, to supplement and alter the facts of life as they are, by imagining them as we wish that they might be. Runaway boys and girls are usually excessive daydreamers, who attempt to escape from the facts of the outer world to an inner world of fancy, which is more flattering to their self-esteem. Daydreams excessively indulged in may in some cases become even more real to the dreamer than the facts of reality.

II

THE ALIAS

'LORNA DOONE?' 'No, ma'am, I don't think I was named after a book. I think it was a cookie, or something,' said Lorna Doone sweetly in answer to the matron's question. However she came by her name, it certainly seemed to fit her well. She had long brown curls and a delicate profile which she turned a little to one side as much as to say — 'Since I am so pretty, why shouldn't I have a pretty name?' 'I'm nineteen,' she went on. 'I was born on the first of June, 1908,' she added after a little hesitation. 'And I am an orphan. My mother died when I was a baby, and then my father died, and now my grandmother is dead. I got to get a job, and I think I'll be a nurse.'

It was indeed a sad situation — so young, so beautiful, and alone, and her life to be dedicated to the sick. The only intrusion of brute fact into the tender picture was that the lady at the desk was quite certain that 'Lorna Doone' cookies had not appeared on the market in 1908; that even if they had, that did not make her nineteen;

and that beautiful unsheltered orphans are rather rare. The chances were that Lorna had christened herself at a recent trip to the grocery store, and had set out to see the world. Nothing would swerve her from her story, however, and so she was given a lodging at the club, and a night to think it over.

Lorna was left to herself the next day. This evidently made her quite uncomfortable, and she seemed to be thinking deeply. In the evening, after much whispering with some of the other girls, she tapped at the matron's door and entered demurely.

'Are you ready to tell me who you are,' the matron asked, 'or do you want to think it over a few days longer?'

Lorna showed not the faintest flicker of surprise or dismay at this challenge. 'I guess I may as well tell you the truth,' she said dreamily. 'I was afraid you wouldn't like it, so I didn't tell — but I am going to be an actress.' She gazed from under her long lashes to get the full effect of this startling announcement.

'Really,' answered the matron briskly. 'Is it the chorus or the screen?'

'It's the films,' replied Lorna eagerly. 'I came up here to see a fella I met once, and he said I'd

make a swell actress. They give you a thousand dollars for clothes to start, and a hundred a week while you're learning. Of course you get more when you've learned, but you start on that,' she continued with satisfaction. 'I seen him twice at the hotel and he's going to bring me a contract — me and three other girls.'

'What's the man's name?' asked the matron in a business-like tone.

Lorna hesitated. 'I don't know his name exactly, and the girls just called each other "dearie." But they're awful nice girls and he's a swell fella, too,' she added with much enthusiasm.

'Well, what's your own name?' continued the matron. 'I suppose you know your own name if not theirs.'

'Yes,' laughed the girl. 'It ain't Lorna, it's Paula. Paula Pinkheart. The fella said that would make a good stage name, too. I was named for my uncle who died in the war,' she added.

'The last war?' asked the matron.

Paula looked a little blank. 'Or maybe it was the Spanish war,' suggested the older woman.

'Yes, that was it. He died in Spain,' answered Paula in a pensive tone.

Then after a pause, during which the matron was silent — 'Can I go out to-night? I gotta see

that fella or I won't get that job, and a hundred dollars a week is pretty good for a beginner.'

'Paula,' said the matron severely. 'I only call you that because I've got to call you something. But you can't leave this place until you tell the truth. I can't have one of my girls telling such lies. What is your real name?'

Paula's eyes began to fill with tears. Then she put her head down on the table and sobbed.

'I think that you would feel better if you told the truth,' said the matron kindly. More sobs. Then a faintly muffled 'Celia' emerged from the buried head.

'Celia?' echoed the matron.

'Yes, my name is Celia Claymore, and I forged a coupla checks. So I run away here from Chi. The girl who roomed with me, she stole all my clothes, so another girl she told me to forge a check and buy some more. So I did.'

'I am sorry to hear this,' said the matron. 'But I don't think that I can learn another name. We shall call you Paula while you are here. The girls have already made it Polly and that's easy to say. Good-night.'

'Good-night,' whimpered Polly. 'I'm awful sorry I told you those lies, but I was so scared they'd get me,' and she trailed upstairs — her

sobs very noisy until she reached the landing, and then subsiding quite briskly.

Telegrams to Chicago failed to substantiate any charge against Celia Claymore or any one remotely answering her description. The usual number of checks had been forged, but none by an extraordinarily pretty young girl with long curls. Moreover, the clothes which Paula was wearing were not new, and an examination of her bag revealed only a nightdress, a silver spoon, and two glasses of grape jelly. People seldom forge checks in order to buy grape jelly. It was evident that the truth was yet to come. Plainly, Paula could not be hurried.

A few days passed without incident, and Paula began to get restless. During this time the checks had not been mentioned, which was evidently a good deal of a disappointment to her, and besides, she hated the name Polly — it sounded so different from Paula.

When the matron finally noticed that she was hovering rather persistently in the offing, she knew that it was time for another interview. So she summoned her to her room.

'Isn't it about time to tell the truth, Polly?' she said. 'You know that you forged no checks. You wouldn't know how. What *did* you do?'

'I didn't do nothing,' sobbed Polly, now quite skillful with the water-works. 'What *could* a poor girl do? When my mother died, my father went off, and I just went out and met a fella, and he said to come with him and so I did. And I kept house for him in a little bungalow. I had to live somewhere and he treated me swell,' she sobbed.

'And where was the bungalow?' asked the matron.

'New York. And I ain't Polly. Peggy's my name, Peggy Ryan.'

'I suppose the bungalow was on Fifth Avenue, wasn't it?' asked the matron helpfully. 'Most of the little bungalows are on the avenue.'

'Yes, ma'am, kind of on the side where the trees are,' sniffed Peggy.

'In Central Park maybe,' suggested the matron.

'I don't know just where. The fella always took me out in a swell car. I didn't go out alone. That fella thought a lot of me.'

'Polly,' said the matron decisively, 'I don't want any more such stories from you. What is your real name and where do your parents live?'

Polly's head was again on her arms and her tears flowed freely. 'In Pittsburgh,' she wailed.

'Why did you run away?' continued the matron.

'Because a fella I met insulted me and I didn't dare go home.'

'What fellow?'

'A fella I met on the street. He took me off to ride and I was afraid my father'd kill me, so I ran away. You want my father's name? He's Wallace Lemare, 15 Central Avenue, and my name is Winifred Lemare. They always call me Winsome for short.'

Having confessed her sad tale, Winsome then retired to the upper story to repair the ravages of her recent tears, and to tell an admiring crowd of girls all the details of her latest incarnation. The matron had begun to frame a telegram to Pittsburgh, when the doorbell rang. A stout woman with a red face and distressed eyes stood upon the threshold. She entered and sank heaving and breathless into a chair which creaked beneath her weight.

'Is Aggie here? Aggie Pack?' she asked anxiously. 'I'm just about dead looking for that child. I ain't slept for a week, and the mister, he can't hardly work. They said you'd know about her, maybe.'

'Is she a very pretty girl with long curls?' asked the matron.

'Yes, that's Aggie,' sobbed her mother, 'and us living only three blocks away all the time and dragging the pond down to her grandma's where we thought she'd drowned. Is she here? I'd better go and tell her papa,' said Mrs. Pack, 'he's so worried.' And she started toward the door.

Then she hesitated, and her face became even redder than before. But its hue came not from heat, but from embarrassment. She moved to the matron's side and whispered. 'You may be kind of surprised at the mister,' she said; 'he's peculiar. It don't bother me, but I just wanted you to know that he was peculiar. He's a good steady worker in the rolling mill, but he has his ways. Aggie takes after her papa, I guess; she's not much like me.'

With this she returned to the open door and called to a figure lurking outside — 'Papa, you can come in. The lady says that Aggie's here. Aggie's all right.'

The matron was waiting with some curiosity to see the peculiarities of Mrs. Pack's mate, as she ushered him in, but she was hardly prepared for what she saw. Mrs. Pack, still hot and heaving, sank back again to her chair with the fatigue of a heavy woman who has lost sleep for a week. But Mr. Pack stood, holding his green velours hat in

his hand, and bowed politely, bending at the waist. He wore a so-called 'snappy' suit cut on the Spanish model. The trousers expanded into a slight bell at each ankle where the legs were slit and trimmed with buttons. The waist-line was high with a satin sash, and Mr. Pack's rather grizzled locks were plastered into long sideburns. What hair he had on his crown was pasted down with the same care as his side whiskers, but the real marvel was his face. Although quite evidently he was born to be a swarthy man, his cheeks had been massaged, cold-creamed, and adorned with rouge. His small features, which attested his paternity to the charming Aggie, were further adorned with red upon the lips, and it was plain that his eyebrows had received much attention.

The matron gazed at him, as all women automatically must, with fascination. She wanted to turn him around like a wax dummy and see how it was done. Such absorbed attention naturally pleased and flattered Mr. Pack. He asked nothing more from the ladies than a fixed, attentive stare from every one he passed. But his self-respect demanded that — and he always got it. He was used to it. He expected it. He lived on it. He had wanted very much to find his daughter, and he wanted very much to make an

impression upon the ladies who had rescued her. Accomplishing both happy results at once was very pleasing to Mr. Pack, and he smiled fatuously.

It turned out that Aggie was fifteen, and that she had got into the habit of prinking so long in front of the glass before going to school, that she had failed to learn the required portion of the Declaration of Independence. She had thereby flunked the history course and was afraid to tell her mother. After leaving home supposedly for her grandmother's, she had sent a note that she was about to end her unhappy life by drowning. 'I suppose I have been kinda sharp with her sometimes, and kinda close with the jelly,' sighed Mrs. Pack. 'But it takes so long to make it, and Aggie and her papa spread it on so thick that sometimes I put it outta sight so as to keep some on hand. I never could make as much as Aggie wants if I spent my lifetime at it. And Aggie sees her papa dolling up, so she wants to,' she continued in an aside to the matron. 'It seems pretty foolish to me, but there,' she added in defense of her family, 'the mister don't drink nor gamble. He gives me his pay regular, and I guess if he and Aggie do kinda brag on their looks it ain't as bad as what lots o' women suffer with their husbands

and daughters. Yes, she and her papa goes to the pictures real often. The mister says he likes to take a pretty girl to a show, and no girl's any prettier than our Aggie. All her girl friends are crazy over the shows, and lots o' times her papa takes them all. I get kinda sleepy myself, and my glasses don't fit very good for distance, so I don't take much interest in 'em, but Aggie's friends and her papa, they keep the run of the serials and know all the stars, don't you?' she asked, and the simpering Mr. Pack nodded assent. 'Aggie never goes any place but the picture show with her girl friends and her papa. The picture house is just around the corner. That's what surprised me so when she said she'd run off and got drowned. It wasn't like her. She never done anything like that.'

The news of her parents' arrival had in the meantime been brought to Aggie and she appeared shyly on the scene. She wept her tearful greetings on their shoulders, and her equally tearful good-byes to the girls who had been, during the week, so satisfactory an audience. The reunited family then recovered its composure and started out the door. But as they reached the sidewalk they hesitated.

'Where shall we go? Home or to the pictures?'

asked Mr. Pack of his family. 'Aggie ain't seen any pictures for a week, have you, Aggie?' he asked, in a tone expressing sympathetic regret that one week should have been so lost. 'There's a swell film at the Beejew and a new serial just beginning called the "Trials of Trixie." Wanta go?'

Mrs. Pack paused and sighed, 'You go if you wanta,' she said. 'I'll go home and get these shoes off. They hurt. Supper'll be ready when you come, but I guess I can't stand any more excitement to-day.'

'All right, Ma,' agreed Mr. Pack. 'You go on home and Aggie and me'll see the show. Aggie needs a little fun after getting so homesick, don't you, Aggie?'

The world of facts being thus disposed of in the person of Mrs. Pack, the world of fancy held full sway. Aggie and her father hurried delightedly toward the enchanted palace of the pictures.

'The first installment ended where Trixie was kidnaped by the rich crooks,' Mr. Pack explained in a whisper. 'They raced her off in a big limousine to a hall underground. It's awful exciting,' he assured her.

'It sounds *swell*,' sighed Aggie contentedly, as they passed through the door.

III

THE NEW HOUSE

THE NEW HOUSE

Human wants or wishes are the basis of human activities, and the satisfaction of these wishes constitutes wealth. That which, for any reason, a person heartily and persistently desires, will dominate his attention, and by so doing will infallibly start and sustain action toward its attainment.

The clash between the fundamental wants of foreign-born parents, and the wants of their American-born children, with a different social inheritance, and the ensuing conflict in their standards of what is socially desirable, is at the basis of many family catastrophes.

III

THE NEW HOUSE

When the tired business man gets into his machine at the end of a wearing day and drives home, he longs for a quiet evening with his family, or perhaps a ticket to the 'show' where he can watch some pretty girls dance. When Lena Denko folded her apron at five o'clock and spread a cover over her power machine, she and the other tired factory girls had similar longings to those of their employer — with this difference. They did not want to watch pretty girls dancing. They wanted to be the pretty girls who danced. Dancing was their ruling passion. They were young and they were vigorous, and just as the débutantes on the Heights could play tennis all the morning, and golf all the afternoon, and still wish to dance all night — so Lena and her friends of the Acme Wire Factory could operate a machine for eight working hours, dance during their lunch period, down the corridors, through the hallway, and in the cloakroom, and wait impatiently for their evenings at the Eldorado where they could continue dancing until the lights were

put out. All the other sports and activities which they could not afford, which they had no time for, and which they had never heard of, were concentrated in the walk, the toddle, and the trot. And yet, as Lena started home after the whistle blew that Friday evening, she knew that her chances either of a quiet home evening or of foxtrots at the Eldorado were about equal. In fact they both exactly equaled zero. She and the other girls in her section often discussed the matter among themselves, but their arguments came to the same deadlock. All of their fathers forbade dancing at the Eldorado, and all of the girls were determined to do it. Elsie was the only one of the four who had hitherto had the courage to flout her parents' orders, extract the bills from her own pay envelope, accept an invitation from one of the wire men, and dance at the Eldorado until the band played 'Home, Sweet Home,' for the last time.

'I got away with it,' she whispered to the less adventurous three: 'and, Gee, it's swell. And I'm going again to-night, because my dad, he's going to his lodge. He'll be out late himself and too drunk to know.'

'Who are you going with?' inquired Lena, fascinated.

'With my girl friend,' whispered Elsie. 'There's

always lots of extra guys at the Eldorado. It's easy to pick them up. Come on, Lena,' she urged. 'You can dance the trot fine. You'll get plenty of partners.'

Lena turned from her machine mournfully. 'My dad would kill me if I went,' she sighed. 'I wish he would, anyhow. I wish I was dead now.'

Such was Lena's state of mind over her prospects. What was the use of being a good dancer if one could never dance? She took her pay envelope with its $13.33 in silence and walked slowly home in the rain. She did not even dare to open the packet and gaze upon the reward of a week's work. Only when the envelope was tightly sealed would her father believe that its contents had not been tampered with. Her money was merely a family tax. She had no sensation of having earned it, nor any pride in its possession. Taxation without representation might be tyranny, but Mr. Denko was building a house, and every penny earned by every Denko was necessary for its completion. Sore as she was, even Lena could not deny that a larger house would be more convenient.

As she entered the kitchen, Mrs. Denko was trying to prepare the evening meal with the two little girls hanging on to her skirts, and the two

little boys running in and out with much clatter.

They seemed to be playing some game which required incessant dodging around and under the table on which the dinner was to be eaten. Chris, the eldest son, was taking off his wet boots by the stove. The baby was screaming violently, and, as Lena entered, her mother thrust him into her arms — 'There, take the kid,' she groaned. 'He won't stop yelling, and I'm about crazy.' Having given Lena the baby, she shoved the two little girls after her into the next room, and administered an ineffectual cuff to the boisterous boys, who nevertheless continued their game of dodging as before.

The room into which Lena went with the children held her cot, and that of her sister Bella. It was also the parlor, but on account of the rain outside, Mrs. Denko had been obliged to string up a clothesline in here, as well as in the two bedrooms, on which a wash was drying, The wet clothes hung in front of the looking-glass so that Lena could not comb her hair, but indeed the baby was clawing at it so vigorously that prinking would have been useless. She played with him faintheartedly. She was really too absent-minded to bother with him, and the two little girls clinging

to her skirts fretted her, because they would not leave her alone.

The other rooms were both bedrooms. In one Mrs. Denko slept with the baby and the two little girls, and in the other Mr. Denko slept with the two little boys. Chris slept on a mattress in the kitchen. They needed a larger house, and it was the dream of Mr. Denko, a dream which he had brought with him from the Old Country, to own a good-sized house and to be monarch of his own acre. He was even now in his own room, noisily talking over the final costs with a carpenter.

Much as they all knew the house was needed, no one but Mr. Denko felt the slightest elation at the prospect of having one. The only land which they could afford to buy was miles away from their present neighbors, and Mrs. Denko dreaded new ones whose language she could not speak. It was many miles away from the children's school, from Chris's poolroom, and from the Eldorado. Although Mr. Denko could catch a ride to work in a friend's truck, the others must walk half a mile of unpaved road to a street car, in which they would cling to a strap for interminable distances both morning and night. Moreover, despite Mr. Denko's steadfast dream that his children would soon be marrying and

renting rooms from him in the new house, his children had no intention of doing anything of the kind, and Mrs. Denko knew that they would not. But she was unable to convince her husband that such an arrangement would never be agreed to by the unaccountable younger generation. It was so sensible and so thrifty that Mr. Denko was certain that they would, and that was an end to it. There was to be a cow in the yard — 'just like the Old Country' — boasted Mr. Denko, and to Lena this was the last touch of ignominy. If any suitor ever ventured so far as to come to see her, which she doubted, he would be faced by a cow. She knew how it would look. It would be just like her grandmother's. She buried her face in the pillow. She felt that she could not bear it.

Meanwhile her father accompanied the carpenter noisily to the door, and then turned to his family with satisfaction. 'Well, I guess we get into our new house soon already,' he announced. 'We move out of here as soon as the rent's up.' The silence which greeted this statement aroused his temper, as it always did when he monologued on his one subject of passionate interest, the house. 'So you don't none of you want a new house? You all like this pigpen?' he asked angrily of the group. 'Who am I building it for but

you and the kids? You don't know nothin',' he finished more specifically to his wife, who was trying to engineer the meal on to the table between the scuffling boys and Chris who was shaving at the sink.

Mrs. Denko knew emphatically that she did not want to go to a half-finished house on a new and lonely street, far away from her friends, even if the house was owned by Mr. Denko. Its ownership seemed a luxury far too dearly bought, and she knew that her children agreed with her. But they all came from a race where for generations land has been the only wealth, and where the father of the family is its lord. So none of them spoke, although their silence increased his irritation.

'Who am I building for?' reiterated Mr. Denko.

'For yourself, and you know it damn well,' muttered Chris through his lather.

'What did you say?' demanded his father.

'Supper's ready. Better eat it hot,' interposed Mrs. Denko diplomatically.

'Eat it,' snorted Mr. Denko, his anger rising. 'Who'd pay for what we eat? None of youse, if you could help it.'

At this statement, whose implications the chil-

dren thoroughly understood, Chris drew his pay envelope out of his pocket, opened it in their presence, extracted five dollars for himself, gave the rest to his father, and returned, without words, to his shaving. Mr. Denko grunted and turned to Lena.

She handed him her envelope without opening it, and then, in a voice which astonished herself as much as her hearers, she said, 'I'd like five dollars too.'

Mr. Denko's jaw dropped, and even Chris and her mother turned and stared. The four small children, feeling that something was afoot, stared also. They were accustomed to family scenes and could feel the electricity in the air.

'What d'ya want five dollars for?' Mr. Denko managed to gasp.

'A dress,' murmured Lena faintly.

'A dress! Ain't you got a dress on?'

'I want another one. This ain't no good,' said the voice in Lena's throat which she felt to be talking on without her control.

Mr. Denko was fairly speechless for a moment, and then the flood broke. 'A dress? You want to be like damned American girls who stand showing off on the street corners. You got one dress and you want another one, when we ain't got no

money to pay for plaster, and got to live in that house all summer without paint on the walls. Can we live all winter without plaster and without paint? Tell me that. I see you going wrong, because you are with damned American girls in that factory, and I tell you I'll get you another job by that carpenter's brother. He's got a laundry with good Hungarian women. He'll pay you fourteen dollars. You go to that laundry Monday and you don't need no new dress.' And he would have gone on elaborating this theme had not the expression on Lena's face made him pause. She was gazing at him with the color gone from her cheeks.

'Hungarian laundry by that carpenter's brother?' she echoed.

At this moment Bella opened the door wet and hungry after a day at the 'Five and Ten,' but paused on the threshold as she scented trouble. The whole family was therefore assembled as an audience for Mr. Denko's answer:

'Yes, by that carpenter's brother,' he repeated. 'Them American girls with their dresses and their dancing are no good. You be better off by good Hungarian working-women. And if Bella gets smart and wants dresses, she can go there too. That carpenter's brother is good fella.

Maybe he marry one of you,' he added with a fatherly attempt at rough coyness.

But this was too much for Lena. 'Marry that Hunky! Marry that Hunky!' she screamed hysterically, and, thrusting the baby into Bella's arms, she turned and threw herself on Chris's cot, sobbing and groaning, 'I wish I was dead.'

Of course, the groans were not entirely occasioned by the suggestion that she marry the carpenter's brother. Even Lena had too much sense for that. This estimable widower was merely the last straw in a nervous strain compounded of work without hope, of dread of a new raw home among strangers, of resentment over her attached wages, of the failure to get a new dress, and of the conviction that never in a long and weary life would she have the chance to foxtrot in fairy-land with the happy beings who crowded its waxed floor. The best dancer in the Acme to be buried in a 'Hunky' laundry! Her only escape a widower with three. Lena's screams relieved her feelings, and she continued to utter them.

Bella turned to Chris and murmured in a loud aside — 'Marry old Matthew? Hot Dog!'

This was too much for Mr. Denko. He turned to Chris. 'So Matthew is a dog, is he? Ain't your sisters chickens, what they call? Ain't old

dog better for chickens than fox or weasel? You want your sisters going around like American girls, no skirts, no stockings, no shawls on their necks, no sleeves on their arms? What you want your sisters to be? Girls on the streets? Ain't it better to marry a good fella and keep outta trouble, than go round like crazy fools, so no fella will marry them? Don't they want no husbands?' he inquired somewhat helplessly of his wife. 'Do they think a good husband's just going to buy them dresses? You bet he ain't,' he added with emphasis, sure of his ground on this point.

Never could righteous orator have had a more unwilling audience. His rhetoric was gall and wormwood to Lena, and to Bella as well. As for Chris, he wanted nothing so much as to be out of it. He was by no means a prude as regards himself, and he had a distinct taste for the kind of 'chicken' whom his father so scornfully described. In fact, he was in a fidget lest he miss a date with one of them at this very minute. On the other hand, he was fearful lest his own sisters might behave as did various wild young women of his acquaintance, and so disgrace the family. He privately wished them both safely married to somebody — anybody — so that they were safe and out of danger.

Mrs. Denko by some maternal intuition, or repressed girlishness, understood her daughters' aspirations in a way that neither their father nor Chris ever could, and she dreaded the contest of wills which she knew was inevitable. She had succumbed to Mr. Denko for a lifetime, but she well knew that her daughters would neither succumb to him, to Matthew, nor to any one like them. As for the five younger children, none of them were interested in their father's speeches. All of them were hungry and clamoring for food.

Mr. Denko made one last angry outburst. 'You girls better be glad if some fool, *any* damn fool, marry you before it's too late. Some good hard-working fella — He'll show you where you get' (he hesitated for his adverb) 'where you-get-UP!' Bella glanced at Chris whose face was a mask. Then she ran over to Lena, and the two girls began to whisper and giggle hysterically. Chris, buckling on his ready-made tie, refused to look at either of them, but Bella shrieked at him, 'Say, Chris, Lena says that if old Matt tries to show her how to get Up, or get By, she'll show him how to get OUT. Where we get Up! What language is that? Oh the bees' knees!' — and again the girls rolled in hysterical laughter, while Chris with a red face, bent only on meeting his

appointment with his girl, snatched his hat, and slammed the door behind him.

His children's jokes were all that ever reduced Mr. Denko to terms. Only a few days before, he had entered the room scrubbed and dressed for his lodge meeting, his big black mustache carefully waxed until it gave his face a ferocious and manly appearance. This mustache was his one claim to personal distinction, and he had admired it for twenty years. He secretly marveled that Chris steadfastly refused to raise one. But when Chris rushed in and asked for his hat, Bella had glanced at her father, and then, with a nod in his direction, had asked Chris why he didn't look on the hat-rack. Then the three elder children had suddenly screamed with such unaccountable laughter that Mr. Denko and the baby had had to laugh too, although both were equally innocent of any inkling of the joke. For all his laughter, Mr. Denko had felt vaguely uncomfortable. What was it all about? 'Hat-racks'? 'Hot dogs'? and 'bees'? It was too much. He now sat abruptly down to his supper and began to eat. When the girls' whispers struck him as suspiciously long-continued, he ordered them to eat too. They ate, but they ate silently, and neither of them ate much.

After the dishes were washed and the five younger children put to bed, Lena announced that she intended to follow them. Bella agreed that she also was tired, and the door closed behind the two sisters for the night. Their voices could be heard for a time in animated whispers. Then they apparently went to sleep.

Of course, if Lena had intended to go to the dance with Elsie when she left the factory, she was even more determined now. Her uncertain future made the Eldorado appear as a golden opportunity to be snatched now or lost forever. Bella was her confidante, and was so sympathetic that she agreed to stay away from the dance herself only because of the fact that she had not been invited. It was agreed, however, that an invitation should be provided for her on the next occasion, and if it worked to-night, there would be many occasions. Lena met her friends by way of the window, and, fortified by much rouge to divert attention from her working dress, she went with them to the Eldorado. As Elsie had promised, they had no difficulty in securing partners from the many young men who waited, scuffling, outside the door.

But just as the promised land was reached, and Lena's dream of happiness was about to be real-

ized, she saw with horror that Chris and his girl were on the floor, slowly but inexorably gliding in her direction. She dragged her partner into the dusky hallway, and almost sobbed into his ear that she did not dare to dance for fear that her brother would tell on her. 'I'm not just afraid he will, I *know* he will,' she repeated, so excited by her adventure and its catastrophe that she could hardly speak.

'I gotta go home,' she moaned. 'I gotta go home, and go quick.'

'Aw — don't go home,' said her partner soothingly, although he agreed with her that they had better avoid trouble. 'I know another dance joint that's better than this. We'll go there. A guy I know runs it. You're too good a little dancer to go home yet.' And before she quite realized what was going on, she found herself driving with her unknown escort to what he assured her was a much finer roadhouse several miles away.

'That's swell,' Lena giggled in a reaction of nervous relief now that she had escaped Chris's eye. Then after a pause, 'Say, kiddo,' she asked, 'what name do you go by? I didn't catch it when we was introduced.'

'My name is Jack Dempsey, and it's the Prince

of Wales's place we're going to,' answered her friend, putting his arm around her.

'Ain't you comical?' giggled Lena again. 'Say, don't get too fresh.'

On Monday night Lena met her father at supper. She looked excited and flushed, but there was a kind of courage about her too, a courage which only the possession of money can give. Both her father and her mother were in the kitchen, but Lena's business was with the father.

'You'd better let me stay at the Acme,' she said, looking him straight in the eye. 'They raised me to-day, and I get more than I would at the laundry.' At this she took out a new five-dollar bill from her purse, and laid it on the table. 'Take that,' she said, her eyes glittering. 'It will help pay the plasterer.'

There was a moment of silence. Mrs. Denko looked blankly at her, and then turned and bent over the stove. Mr. Denko gazed doubtfully at the bill and then at Lena's eyes which still stared at him with a metallic glitter. His own glance dropped and he hesitated for a moment. But his fascinated eyes could see nothing but the new bill upon the table. It blocked his vision, and blotted out every scruple. With a grunt he took the

money, thrust it in his pocket, and turned away. Lena gazed for a moment at the backs of both her silent parents. Then she gave a short laugh, stepped quietly into the front room and shut the door.

'But why blame it all on your father, Lena? How did he know where you got the money?'

'He knew all right. Where did he suppose I got it? I'd be likely to pick it off a bush, wouldn't I?'

'But you told him you got a raise.'

'Do they pay a five-dollar raise on Monday? Friday's payday, ain't it?'

'Maybe he didn't know that factories don't raise a girl's wages that way.'

'He's a working-man himself. He knows damn well they don't.'

'But why don't you blame your mother too? She knew as much as he did.'

'She had a hunch. But what could *she* do? She's all right, but she can't do nothing. She can't even talk American.'

'I suppose that we just can't realize how much your father wanted to get into that new house.'

'Nor how much we kids wanted to keep out of it.'

'How long before Chris found you out?'

'Two months.'

'How much money did you give your father?'

'Sixty-seven dollars besides my wages.'

'Did he take it and ask no questions?'

'Sure he did. Sixty-seven "plunks" is quite a help toward plaster.'

'What does he say now?'

'He says now, I can't come in the old hole. It's too good for me.'

'But he feels badly over what you've done. You know he does.'

'Sure he does. But I'll bet he feels worse that they found it out before the house was paid for. He'd feel more comfortable cussing me in a house out of debt.'

'Lena, be just to your father. He is a proud man. He feels terribly over the disgrace.'

'If he was so good, why didn't he stop it?'

'I suppose that he longed so hard for that house to be out of debt, that he never stopped to think about where you got your money.'

'That's just it. He thought more about the house than he did about me.'

'What do you think he should have done, Lena?'

Long pause and slow answer. 'I don't know no one's duty, Miss, but I know this. It don't pay to

love money too much, and to want more things that it buys than you can afford. It don't pay whether you're rich or poor. My father is a poor man, but he loves money just like the rich men do. Maybe it's gold and diamonds that are luxuries for them, but paint and plaster was luxuries for him, and a new dress was a luxury for me. A house is all right if you can afford it, but he couldn't. And a house you can't afford is as bad as diamonds you can't afford, ain't it? We all want something we ain't got, and we go crooked to get it. That's about the size of it.'

'But, Lena — a house is more necessary than diamonds, or even a new dress, isn't it? It's more thrifty.'

'Maybe it is, Miss. But if my father had given me the dress *I* wanted, instead of buying the house *he* wanted — if my father, instead of some other guy, had thrown away his money on me — he might not 'a' been so thrifty, and we might 'a' been crowded — but I wouldn't 'a' been *here*.'

IV
BULLIEVE ME!

BULLIEVE ME!

Words as a symbol of thought, are essential if human beings are to be able either to think clearly or to express themselves to each other. The absence of an adequate vocabulary in which to express one's emotional life, often has the serious consequences of forcing the emotion to express itself prematurely in more crude and direct ways than words, and, particularly with young people, forces crises which might have been averted if action might have been deferred by adequate speech. Sports and play, with their accompanying words and actions, perform the valuable function of filling an otherwise vacant, wordless, and hence dangerous leisure.

IV

BULLIEVE ME!

If she is rich and if her suitor comes to call, there are many resources by means of which he may be entertained. He may motor with her, or he may dance. He may be taken to the garden or the billiard room. And always he may be fed. All these amusements still hold good, even though both the lady and her lover may be dull as well as rich. If conversation flags, there is the Victrola, or ice cream. And there are tickets to the opera, where even the dullest lady may smile sweetly, and where even the most ponderous escort may at least call a taxi, and provide flowers and candy, if not wit.

Moreover, if both lovers are poor, but have intelligence and resource, romance may still flourish. Even though the boarding-house has no room for callers, there is the park. Books (borrowed and not bought) may be read, and all the world discussed. An educated though frugal pair of lovers on a bench beneath the bough, with a book of verses and a sandwich, unless they are *too* tired, and *too* worried, need little pity from any one — as many of them will testify.

But suppose the lovers belong to that large group which has no training, no resource, and no vocabulary. Suppose that the Victrola and the matinée are equally unattainable, and that the rooming-house affords no privacy for a courting pair. There is still the park-bench, but there is no taste for verses. No ability to discuss them, or anything else. It is spring, and there is spring restlessness and a desire for happiness. One working day is over and another looms all too near. They share the human urge to escape to a world of dreams. But how can all this be expressed by lovers who have little imagination, no abstract ideas, and no words?

Have you ever listened to them from a neighboring bench?

'Bullieve me, he wuz some guy. He says, "Hello, girls," he sez, and I sez, "Hello, yourself." And he sez, "Where you going, cutie?" and I sez, "I ain't goin', I've been and got back." That's what I told him, and you'd oughta seen him. Gee, he looked as though he'd lost his buttons. Bullieve me, I can tell a guy where to get off. "Just watch my smoke," I sez. And he sez, "You've said an earful." And I sez, "Bullieve me, you've said it," I sez.'

But eventually the anecdotes are exhausted,

and no conventional phrases, however sparkling, were meant to last a whole evening. What next? Never shall I forget the scorn with which one girl answered me when I asked of a certain dull couple of our acquaintance:

'What in the world do they talk about?'

'Talk,' snorted she. 'They *don't* talk. They *hug!*'

How could the situation have been more briefly or more accurately described?

With a country club or the matinée — or without them, if there is some training in social ingenuity — there may be legitimate aids to young people's conversation. But when the occupants of the park bench have exhausted their slender stock of words and ideas, but still have emotions to spare, they indulge in the only activity which occurs to them which they can afford.

Not long ago two young men came to our association office on a delicate quest. With some help from us, the information was extracted from them that they were apparently in search of wives. But how to get them? The girls they met upon the street were tough. The young men worked in a foundry where they saw no women, and their only sources of society, the street, the shop, and the boarding-house, offered them no

chances for safe and sane romance. They were desperate. As a last resort they attacked our office, to be helped to meet some girls — object matrimony. 'We even thought,' said they, in a last impulse of self-depreciation and apology, 'that maybe there were two nice girls in a family way, who would be glad of husbands, even if we haven't much money.' Could any Sir Galahads offer more? No cross-questions discouraged their persistency. They submitted to examinations of their mentality and their bank-books. Both were slight, but satisfactory. What could any philanthropists do but promise introductions?

Such are the anomalies of human nature, however, that the few girls whom we knew, who were indeed in need of honest young husbands, refused even to look at the well-meaning suitors. Like the rest of us they hated pity and they showed considerable spirit in refusing even an introduction to men who might have felt that their company was a favor conferred. But some other protégées, not in so embarrassing a situation, announced themselves as ready to meet any young men who cared to call. Despite our assumed nonchalance, a sixth sense told them that something interesting was afoot. The club parlor was selected as the place and Thursday evening as

the time. Promptly at seven-thirty the bell rang, and two dumb young men, eager for romance, were presented to a group of girls as eager and as speechless. Had they been rich, there might have been a theater party or a supper. Had they been resourceful, there might have been parlor games, music, or lively conversation. But they were neither. There was no room for dancing, and no music. Nor was there any desire to dance if there had been, for no girl cared to dance with any but the guests, and these were only two. Silence, utter silence. In desperation, the matron, who had considerately left them to themselves for a few minutes, was recalled. Only she could force answers from shy young swains by endless questions, and yet not at the same time invoke the jealousy of the girls by such a monopoly of the conversation. Suffice it to say, that after several calls, by some means or other, two of the more determined girls were wearing rings and making preparations for their weddings. How was it done? Surely not by words. And how would it all have ended had not the club doors been open to them, had not the matron been ready for first aid to the speechless, and had not the character and intentions of the young men been avowed as 'honest' before the calls began?

Some weeks ago there fell into our hands a letter whose obscenity was almost past belief. It was written by a young workman to a girl under our guardianship, and, since its indecency was so flagrant, it seemed to justify an investigation. The young man responded promptly to our summons, but as he entered the office, even those of us who are somewhat accustomed to inconsistencies in conduct, stared at him in surprise. Instead of a ruffian, there stood a rosy-cheeked boy, carefully dressed in his best clothes for the call, and with his mouth drawn down to a suitable Sunday expression. Fearing lest we had the wrong man, we placed the letter before Mike.

'Did you write it?' we asked.

'Yes, lady, I did,' said he. 'I hadn't oughta done it, but she was the only girl I had, and she went with another feller.'

No other explanation could he give. His girl was a flirt. He was angry with her, and he told her so in the only words he knew.

'What good did you think such a letter would do?' we asked.

'I was mad,' he answered simply.

'Where did you hear such words?'

'I work with a steam-fitter all day, just us two. He says those words, so I said 'em.'

'Why don't you get another girl, instead of insulting this one?' we inquired.

'Because I don't know any, and I liked that one.'

'Do you expect any girl to come back to you after a letter like that?'

'She would if she liked me, but she don't,' he said sadly.

Silence. Finally, after some study of Mike's disconsolate face, we ventured:

'Mike, you sound as if you were lonesome, so lonesome that you did not care what you said.'

Quickly he leaned over the table with the first sign of life in his eyes.

'Lonesome, lady, you've said it. Lonesome is what I am. I don't know anybody else, and I liked that girl.'

He stalked out of the room with a lingering sidelong glance at his enchantress who sat outside.

Did we imagine it, or was there a flicker of forgiveness in her eyes, as he gazed miserably at her? Had she merely meant to administer a rebuke as preface to a later pardon? Did she really understand, as well as we, that his furious jealousy was a tribute to her hold on him, and that his words were a mere accident due to the fact that he had no legitimate language of emotion?

If a man is wretchedly angry, he must express it somehow, and to a woman it must be in words. If any fine phrases of passion are unknown to him, he must use the only forceful words in his vocabulary. Mike's confused obscenities were an attempt to express a jealousy as overwhelming as Othello's, just as 'Shake a leg, chicken,' would be his way of saying, 'Come into the garden, Maud.'

Recently I was honored by an invitation to be a member of a committee to provide instruction for working-girls — girls of intelligence, but no social training in American ways. Various plans were suggested for filling the gaps in their education, but with the memory of many awkward courtings in my mind, my one request was this: 'Give girls who are poor, the equivalent of what rich girls get at dancing school, in dramatics, sports and games. Teach them how to entertain their beaux — beaux who are without money, without poise, and without words, but who long, like the rest of us, for beauty and romance. Teach them fifty-seven varieties of entertainment — by twos, by threes, and by roomfuls. Teach them how it can be done with more words and less "hugging." For they need to know — *bullieve me!*'

V

ESTELLE AND SAM

ESTELLE AND SAM

Adaptation of one's own personality to that of one's relatives, is one of the prime requirements of family life. Young people who have not been trained to such adaptability during their formative years, by normal family relationships, find it almost impossible in later life to maintain a normal home of their own. They tend to escape the irksomeness of family requirements by means of desertion, vagrancy, and resistance to any tie that forces the adaptation of their behavior to that of others.

V

ESTELLE AND SAM

PERHAPS the love-affairs of Estelle and Sam would not have impressed me so deeply if they had not been the first. But it had happened that on my earliest visit to the court-room, Estelle's slim little figure was standing before the desk of the Juvenile Judge, while her sulky young husband glowered on the other side. Estelle was in tears, and Sam was in no pleasant temper, for the sermon he had just listened to from the Judge was not flattering. The facts were that Sam, despite his twenty-two years, had already married twice, and that he had both wives at once but supported neither of them.

He was a rather handsome blond fellow with broad shoulders which looked fitted for work, although work was the last thing that interested Sam. He claimed that he had been tricked into his first marriage by a girl whom he met in Seattle when he was in the navy. After a short honeymoon she had disappeared, and Sam being transferred to an Eastern city had no time nor money to look her up. He said quite frankly and de-

cisively that he did not care what had become of her, and that he had no money to spare for a divorce, even if he knew. So what was a young fellow to do? In the meantime Estelle had recently got out of the orphanage where she had spent most of her life. She was pretty in a slight, childish way, and had a pert, saucy manner of speaking which was attractive and passed for wit. She could read and write, but never did if she could avoid it. She could do simple arithmetic with equal dislike. So it was natural enough that she should play truant when she could, in order to dance at Luna Park, and exchange repartee with the dancing partners whom she met at this, the only place she had to meet them. There was no anxious mamma to see that Estelle met an eligible young man. She had to do that for herself, and her childhood at the orphanage, mothered by an overworked matron, had not trained her judgment in the selection of a husband.

So Sam and 'Stell' were married, and the baby was born six weeks later in the Charity Hospital. For in the meantime, the news of Sam's first wedding had got abroad and he had been in the workhouse, quite unable to provide care for his new wife and baby, even if he could otherwise have done so.

Of course the weak point in Estelle's case was that she had always known that Sam was already married, and reflection would have told her that even their belated wedding was rather ineffectual. But there was no doubt that she was much in love with Sam, and how should one expect her to reflect? She was not a deep thinker by inheritance, for the records showed that her improvident and irresponsible parents had been very familiar with the court-room in which she was now standing. Moreover, her training had not cultivated any capacity which she might have had for foresight. She had been passed from an orphanage to industrial schools and detention homes, with no more chance for individual initiative than a private in the army. What wonder, then, that when she was at last set free, and danced during long summer evenings with a sturdy young blond stranger, that it went to her head, and that his legal entanglements with an unknown lady seemed unimportant?

And one must not be too hard on Sam. He himself was the product of a union in which the father's part consisted mainly of desertion, varied only by reappearances to demand the money which his wife had saved up during his absence. Naturally enough, Sam had taken to the streets,

where crap-shooting and petty thieving had given him his conception of finance. And his other social affiliations had been such that he secretly thought that it was rather handsome on his part to have gone through any wedding ceremony at all, with either wife. He was utterly speechless before the Judge, but his face spoke his thoughts plainly:

'Why all this fuss? Estelle is all right, ain't she? She has a ring that cost me five "bones," hasn't she? Hospitals are supposed to take care of kids, ain't they? A fellow couldn't support any one while he was in the workhouse, could he? How could he tell where his first wife was? Maybe she was dead. How did the Judge know she wasn't? Anyhow [a glare of reproach at Estelle], if she doesn't stop crying to the gallery for sympathy, I'll give her something to cry about when we get home.'

Estelle began to grasp this last thought herself, and one could see her reflections in her face.

'After all, it's Sam I've got to live with, and not the Judge, or the witnesses. I'd better begin to play up, not to the gallery, but to Sam.'

These changes of front in the court-room occasion no surprise when one is a veteran in the law. But when witnessed for the first time it

gives the observer a decided jolt, when the plaintiff who has been telling without reserve of her own injuries and the infamy of her lover, suddenly changes her tactics, and testifies that nothing in the world shall separate her from her unworthy mate. Yet it was reasonable enough. For where else in the world had Estelle to go but to Sam? At least she counted for more in his life than she did in the life of any one else, and Sam on his side admitted that Estelle was a 'cute kid' when she didn't 'jaw' too much. Moreover, both of them were rather interested in the baby, who bore a flattering likeness to his father. Sam, in expansive moments, boasted of his broad-shouldered baby as a future 'pug,' and 'Stell' hovered and fussed over it, as the first real blood relative that she had ever possessed.

The Judge, beneath his fatigue and exasperation, felt a great deal of sympathy for the undisciplined young couple, and upon Estelle's prompt assertion that she wanted nothing so much as to live with Sam, and his sulky promise that he would turn over a new leaf, they went off side by side dragging the sleeping baby behind them in his go-cart.

They started housekeeping in a three-room flat. Sam had a job at twenty-five dollars a week, the

first wife was somehow or other disposed of by the kindly judge, and the stage seemed set for living happily ever after.

But it seems to be hard to begin living happily ever after if you have never been taught how to do it. In a month Estelle called upon us, in tears. She was terribly lonesome, and Sam got mad at her for crying, which made her cry all the harder. If institutional life had trained Estelle for anything, it had trained her to enjoy a crowd. She had cooked with ten girls in the kitchen, and washed with twenty girls in the laundry. All her housewifely tasks had been accompanied by what is known as 'joshing' — a gay kind of gossip, often pointless and sometimes unrefined. But in any case it was sociable and interminable, and Estelle had been rather famous for what was known as her 'Marathon jaw.' Now for four weeks Estelle had been living in solitude save for a husband who left at six-thirty every morning, and a baby who slept all the time. In the evening, they could not leave the baby alone and go out together. Sam claimed that no young fellow could be expected to sit with a kid every evening, and Estelle retorted, that after ten hours of solitude she needed to get out more than Sam did. To this Sam replied, 'What did you want to get

married for?' And Estelle, who by this time was getting hysterical, screamed that she wished she hadn't. Such a remark was, of course, a good excuse for Sam to snatch his hat and shout as he slammed the door, 'I divorced one and I can divorce two,' and Estelle's last shot, 'You'll get the workhouse for this,' fell on no ears but those of the placid baby, whom his frantic mother now fell to kissing until he howled with her in unison.

The first time this happened, Estelle was brought to reason rather quickly, and Sam, who was equally shamefaced over his fit of temper, did penance by taking both his wife and baby to a movie. For a while quiet reigned. But it was only temporary. The outbursts began to come about once a week and sometimes oftener. In vain did Estelle's friends plead with her to keep her temper and her tongue quiet. Her days of loneliness with no one but the baby to talk to irritated her so much that the sight of Sam coming through the door with the salutation, 'Let's eat,' let loose a torrent of words, which Sam after a day in the coal yards was in no mood to listen to. As a matter of fact, Sam thought he had behaved pretty well. Three months of steady grind for a fellow used to short jobs interspersed with loafing and 'shooting pool' were beginning to tell on his

nerves, and he, as well as Estelle, missed the easy give-and-take of his former crowd, who now joked him as he passed and called him a 'family man.' Being a family man is no slight undertaking if you have not been brought up to it, nor being a family woman for that matter.

There came some weeks when Sam did not show up at all, either at home or at his job, which he naturally lost. It was evident that, if Sam would not support the baby, Estelle must do so, and a place was found for her where she could do housework and board her baby near by. There were several servants in the house, so Estelle had the social life and conversation which she had previously missed, and the police finally succeeded in locating Sam and bringing him in to state his side of the case. His story was brief and to the point. He would agree to pay for the support of the baby, but no one could make him listen to the 'line of talk' that Estelle gave him every night. Any one who had seen Estelle in a tantrum knew just what he referred to, but Estelle could only protest between her tears that although she knew she shouldn't scold her husband, she could not help it. Her explanation of her temper threw so much light on all the girls of her type, that we never failed to think of it with other young people

brought up as she had been. 'I never could get any attention paid me in the Home unless I lay on the floor and kicked, and I don't know how to get anything any other way,' she sobbed. 'I know it makes Sam sore, but I just see red,' she added.

So the flat was given up, and for a time their affairs ran so much more smoothly, now that Estelle and her husband did not live together, that it seemed useless to urge them to try joint housekeeping again. The only difficulty was that Sam seemed still to have such a grip upon his wife's affections. She asked for him continually, gave us pictures of the baby to give to him, and even made some of her especially nice cookies for his birthday. He himself had an odd way of making her an occasional call and taking her to a show, only to disappear again after having left his monthly pay for the baby who continued to grow up in his image.

Then his visits became less frequent and the baby's board money ceased altogether. Estelle harassed us with telephone calls and notes. Where was Sam? Was he going with another girl? Knowing his habits this seemed likely, and sure enough, on investigation, it turned out to be true. Reports came from various quarters that Sam and a sprightly brunette had been seen together at

several balls, despite the fact that on one occasion a friend of Estelle's had been careful to let the dark lady know that Sam was already married. Sam did not deny the charge. It must be said in Sam's favor that he never did deny it. He always maintained that he did not have to lie; they came without it — all of which was sadly true. However, the dark lady laughed scornfully, and the next we heard was the frantic voice of Estelle over the telephone informing us that she had it on good authority that Sam had married again. An inquiry at the marriage license bureau proved that she was correct, and that Sam had once again ventured upon matrimony without the formality either of a divorce or of removal to another city.

If ever Estelle had a tantrum, she had one then. There was no doubt that she was fond of Sam. Whatever she had done before she met him, she had not swerved from her devotion to him since their marriage. She could do everything in the world for him but hold her tongue. And now that he had left her for another woman she made no effort to hold it. 'She would get him and get him good.' 'She would show that black-faced girl where she got off,' and so on, and so on. So the charge was made against him by his wife, and once more, within a year and a half, Sam stood

before the Judge's desk and faced the charge of bigamy.

He and Estelle had been married in another State, which necessitated some delay in looking up the record of their marriage, and during that interval Sam was committed to the workhouse. This left both wives at large in the same city. Suddenly we heard nothing of the affair. Estelle seemed to have quieted down, and to our astonishment we learned that she had succumbed to a morbid curiosity to see her rival and had called upon her at Sam's new flat. From seeing her, the acquaintance had progressed so rapidly that the two girls spent all of their free time in one another's company and were known to have had not only long confidential talks together about the man they both loved, but to have had luncheon with Sam as an invited guest on his release from the workhouse. Later, Sam was taken to see the baby, in whom he had shown much interest of late, and, to the consternation of all the friends, Estelle announced that she wished to drop the case.

If a wife prosecutes her husband for bigamy, he can be put in the 'Pen.' But unless she or his unlawful wife, or some one else is interested enough to pursue the matter, it drops of its own weight, and such seemed likely to be the fate of the suit

against Sam. Whether when he was faced with his former wife he had a revulsion of feeling in her favor, or whether it was the baby, who was a boy any man might be proud of — or whether it was the less sentimental prospect of three to five years in the 'Pen' — who shall say? At any rate, Sam was swinging back to Estelle, who was looking very pretty and stylish in some new clothes she was buying by installments. His renewal of devotion was the more easy, as the dark lady had other friends who were willing to console her, and it was rumored that she had given up the flat and sold the furniture.

We saw little of Estelle during this period. Occasionally she called us up to say she would never speak to Sam again, and that she intended to begin the prosecution. But since the next day invariably brought a recantation, no one paid much attention to her. We were too thoroughly out of patience with them both to bother with them. Finally we heard that 'Stell' had taken a flat and that Sam was living in it, although his wife kept her housework position in order to pay the baby's board. Apparently she had given up the struggle of trying to make Sam pay it, and he, without that responsibility, was willing to live in her flat so long as she paid the rent.

So that is how it stands. Sam is working and Estelle is working. Estelle is rather more steadily at work than Sam, and the baby's board and Sam's stylish suits are much more likely to be paid for out of her pocket than out of that of her reclaimed husband, although he pays her way handsomely to an occasional show.

So long as she does not live with him, she does not scold him quite so much, and so far Sam has not married again. There is no doubt that Estelle loves him, and there is no doubt that she loves the baby. There is no doubt that Sam is proud of the husky boy who resembles him so closely, and, while there may be some doubt as to how much constancy of affection Sam is capable of toward any woman, at least he has been married to Estelle longer than he has ever been married to any one else, and whatever his lapses in behavior, they have not as yet sent him again to the workhouse.

Both Sam and his wife are on most friendly terms with the dark lady and with her husband, and they often play cards with them on a Sunday evening. They even joke about the resemblance between their two eldest children.

VI
GERTRUDE AND GUS

GERTRUDE AND GUS

The exhibitionistic impulse, strong in infancy, which is the desire to force one's own person continuously upon the notice of one's associates, remains unusually prominent in some people, in their later life, especially if its normal development has been suppressed. The impulse to be noticed and to win approbation is in itself normal if kept within bounds. But it may be warped by early training into an absorbing appetite for attention, which is certain to cause friction in social and family life.

A constructive method of utilizing this impulse is by training the individual, through recreational and artistic expression, to be able to win legitimate praise because of creative achievement.

VI

GERTRUDE AND GUS

Of course, the great trouble with Gertrude was that she didn't start right. Her father, at the first hint of her arrival, had run away as fast as he could, and, while her mother could not do the same, it was not because she would not have been glad to. Although Gertrude was sixteen when we first met her, her mother was still blaming her for being born. 'Gosh, that woman can't forget it,' said Gertrude with disgust. 'I don't suppose she *did* want me. But a kid can't help being born — as I see it.' Which reflection seemed as just as was her further remark, 'It seems to me it was as much her fault as mine.'

However, Gertrude's mother absolutely refused to take any responsibility for her advent, and took no interest in her fortunes. Gertrude had been obliged to look out for herself, and it cannot be said that she had made a very good job of it. She told her story with that disarming frankness of a girl thrust out into a wicked world too young to develop the usual repressions of speech, from sheer lack of knowledge that any are

necessary. Goodness, badness, marriage or the lack of it, this fellow or that, truancy from one school, and raids in another hotel — all made up one muddle of experiences and escapades, from which one standard alone apparently emerged. Gertrude had decided that she wanted a HOME. Her ideas of what a home might be were certainly not derived from any of the rooming-houses occupied by herself or her friends. But she had, as it turned out, a romantic nature, and, while other flappers went to the movies to thrill over the love scenes of their favorite stars, Gertrude found her inspiration in the kitchen and fireside scenes from 'The Old Homestead,' 'Way Down East,' and kindred dramas.

'I'd like a job where there was an old couple whose children were grown up, and who would sit around the lamp in the evening. I want to talk to the old lady and to call her mother, or grandma, or something.' Gertrude was a romanticist, and while she was talking about her old couple she really meant what she said. But she had I hate to think how many years of restless habits behind her, and she could not change them all at once. So, the next time we saw Gertrude, although a home had been found for her, interest in the old couple had waned, and interest in Gus was at its

height. Gus was a fireman, which meant, of course, that he had a good pair of shoulders and a uniform. Such a combination is damaging to the peace of mind of any girl of sixteen, but to Gertrude it was fatal. A city employee, in uniform, who dashed through the streets on a red truck, and told tales of hairbreadth escapes from burning buildings — such was Gus, and he played his Othello to her Desdemona, pleased enough to have so breathless an audience. As for Gertrude, her head was completely turned, and her heart melted within her. We could not share her enthusiasm over Gus. Shoulders he undoubtedly had. But his face was like a weasel, and his eyes were shifty. However, it was apparent that Gertrude needed a home more than ever, and since Gus seemed, in his unmannerly fashion, willing to furnish it, there was nothing to do but to help them settle. Again Gertrude's china-blue eyes gazed into ours with a frankness that seemed almost unearthly. 'Gus always said that he would marry me if he had to, and now he has got to, and so he says he will.' On this chivalrous basis, Gus and Gertrude went to the City Hall. There could be no church wedding, for Gus was a Catholic and Gertrude, for some reason, had decided that she was a Protestant. We could not discover why she

thought so, until she said, cheerfully: 'They say if you are Catholic you go to church, and I don't go, so I must be a Protestant — and I won't turn Catholic for any mutt.'

The theological question being thus settled, the ceremony was performed, and Gertrude trudged to their new flat full of hopes of having a home at last. It bothered us a good deal that both Gus and Gertrude had thought it necessary to stock the rooms quite so thoroughly with heavy stuffed furniture for which they were to pay fifteen hundred dollars, by installments. Being absolutely dependent upon Gus's wages, which were not large, and with other inevitable expenses ahead, such very heavy rocking-chairs and such very large lamps seemed unnecessary in an apartment so small that one's shins continually knocked against the carved and tasseled trimmings.

But this particular style of furniture had adorned the vivid scene in Gertrude's imagination, and now that she had a chance to see herself against so rich a background she could not bring herself to start with less. After all, she was only sixteen. So we tried to hope that their courage would last as long as the installments must be paid, and that Gus would fit into the rosy dream

even better than the big, shiny 'buffett' fitted into the dining-room.

Soon after this Gus lost his job. He had, at Gertrude's urgent request, come home to keep her company one evening. She complained so much of being lonesome that her insistance, combined with his own desires, made him find a nap on the magenta sofa more comfortable than a chair at the firehouse. But awkwardly enough, there was a fire during his absence, so Gus wore his uniform no more, but became an unpicturesque figure in overalls. Of course, this nettled him, and he was inclined to think it was Gertrude's fault. Gertrude was so accustomed, however, to having everything her fault, that she worried little about it. She had more important things to think of just then, for she, in the meantime, was trying to bring up her three-weeks-old baby on the hospital schedule — she who had never done anything on schedule time in her life. Naturally enough, one set of schedules was all that she could hold in mind at once. The furniture premiums were forgotten and the installment man gave his ultimatum. Inside of six months Gertrude and Gus were in a still smaller flat, very sparsely furnished, and three hundred dollars out of pocket — a small sum, after all, to

have paid for six months of varnish and upholstery.

But a baby and domestic cares were far from enough to slake the thirst of Gertrude's romantic soul. Gus, whose temper had never been of the best, was finding the steady grind of loading box-cars much less to his taste than playing cards in the engine house with the other firemen. Moreover, a hot August with a fretful baby did not improve Gertrude's disposition, and she missed the trips to the merry-go-rounds and the ice-cream parlors with which her previous summers had been enlivened. So, when Gus reminded Gertrude, as he often did, that his fallen fortunes were because of her, she, in turn, reminded him that she had had many lovers more wealthy than he, and could have them now if she so much as winked an eye or dropped a handkerchief. As a matter of fact, Gertrude had done neither since her infatuation with her husband. Even six months of life with the grouchy Gus had not changed her love for him. But she had the theory, based on much meditation and consultation with her girl friends, that a husband with an attractive wife like herself should continue his love-making, and that he should with gifts and 'shows' express his appreciation of his good luck in winning her. If he

declined to do so, he must be made to by jealousy.

The dramatic device of forging letters to other people has often been made use of in fiction and on the stage, but Gertrude conceived the idea of forging one to herself. It was easy to see why this occurred to her, for her usual dramatic outlet had been recently suppressed. She had been a great patronizer of the circulating library which had a station in the local drug-store. From its shelves she treated herself to volume after volume of the most sugary and impossible fiction, which she read until late at night, and aggravated Gus past endurance by her absorption in it, and her quotations from it. One evening she propped herself with pillows on the kitchen floor, to read her latest romance, meaning by this pose, one must conclude, to arouse curiosity in her husband when he came home and found her there. But she inadvertently fell asleep. And when Gus arrived very tired and hungry, there he found her, in the middle of the floor, all the lights ablaze, and too deep in slumber to notice either the arrival of her husband or the hungry protests of her baby from the next room.

This was too much. 'Darned foolishness,' snarled Gus. 'Using the electricity reading a

bunch of nonsense.' So Gus prohibited the perusal of any more books whatever, and Gertrude, thus suddenly cut off from her principal joy, proceeded to write, if she might not read.

The first fruit of her pen was a most outrageous love-letter from a mythical Charlie Cooms, which she left carelessly on the stove for Gus to find when he came in. Gus found it. The first we knew of this episode was Gertrude calling over the telephone in the hysterical voice which she loved to use — 'Take me somewhere. Gus is going to kill me if you don't.'

When we next saw Gus (we did not hurry), he was still shaking with wrath, and thrust the letter into our hands. The letter would have been funny if its disconnected anti-climaxes had not thrown such a sad light on Gertrude's past. With a free hand to frame a lover to her own taste, she could construct nothing but a monstrosity. Charlie Cooms, if he had existed, would have been even more undesirable than Gus. But the handwriting was so plainly that of Gertrude herself, and her leaving it on the stove so obvious, that even Gus was convinced of its authorship. This conviction did not mend matters, however. If he was not now angry at her infidelity, he was even more enraged at her perverseness. A betrayed husband

has some dignity; one who has been made ridiculous has none. Gus seemed to feel that his position as head of the house could be restored only by means of an application of his powerful fist. Gertrude said that he knocked her down, and we not only believed her, but we did not blame him. As Gus himself tersely remarked, 'If she wants to kid me, she can take what is coming to her.' Poor Gertrude, it was not the first time that she had been knocked down, nor was it likely to be the last.

How any one could have the courage deliberately to bait the bear-like Gus was more than we could see — but Gertrude was determined to play the heroine in her imaginative drama, and she was equally determined that Gus should play the hero. After all, she was barely seventeen, spending hot days and nights in a little flat with a heavy, fretful baby. The romance in her system was like a violent attack of the measles — it simply had to come out, or turn in and slay its victim.

The next form of the attack was boarders. In a revulsion of feeling against having been an undutiful wife, Gertrude determined to be wifely to a fault. She would help out the family budget by taking a girl friend and an elderly relative to

board, and with the proceeds of the venture she would herself refurnish the flat so bereft of the adornment with which they had started their married life.

In order to start off well with the boarders, it was necessary to begin the furnishing at once, as a kind of advance investment, and Gertrude found a hitherto unknown joy in shopping by correspondence. In their first venture, she and Gus had wandered through the shops buying what they saw. But Gertrude now discovered that no furniture in reality is half so dazzling as the description of it in the catalogue, and she was lost in the contemplation of 'dressy dressers' and 'classy davenports,' as if she had not been caught once in the installment mill. So, although she lived in a city with myriads of house-furnishing establishments, she placed a large order in a distant city noted for its 'merchandising by mail.' With the rather commonplace articles which appeared in response to her orders, the two boarders and their host started out on a domestic experiment.

This was Gertrude's plan. The boarders would pay her and she would pay for the furniture. When the debt was off her hands, she would buy presents for Gus and stylish clothes for the baby and herself. But everything went wrong from the

very first. The elderly relative promptly lost his job, and could not pay his bill, and the girl friend, who was behind on the payments for her last winter's fur coat, asked for an extension of time. This shortage in cash naturally affected Gertrude, who in turn asked for an extension on her own bill. But while she had been most good-natured in her response to her boarders, the furniture dealer was far from good-natured to her. If the furniture was removed for the second time, the boarders would have to go too, for there would be no place for them to sleep, nor any dishes for them to eat from. Moreover, if they left now, they would never pay for their back board. Obviously, Gus, instead of getting presents, must pay for the luxury of his house guests. In the meantime, the elderly relative, having so much time on his hands, was using it to flirt with the girl friend, and, as if this were not enough, Gus himself, as a slight compensation for so much trouble and inconvenience, began to join in the flirtation. Gertrude, flushed and unhappy over her steaming dishpan, would hear uproarious echoes from the next room where the two men were vying with each other to entertain the guest.

'Her owing me thirty-five dollars on her board, Gus takes her to a movie and leaves me

with the baby — the nerve of that!' sobbed Gertrude.

The only solution to this tangle, which threatened to be not only a love-triangle but a parallelogram, was to send back the furniture once more, evict the boarders, and start again, only a few more hundred dollars in debt than they were when they were married.

What next? Gertrude, having exhausted her dramatic possibilities of the wayward and the dutiful wife, selected as her next rôle that of the hysterical patient. She was seized with frequent attacks, which culminated in a particularly violent outburst of nerves outside of a movie theater.

The attack was brought on by an argument as to which parent should carry the baby. Both of them firmly and noisily declined to perform this office, until Gertrude, having by a ruse got young Calvin Coolidge into his father's arms, left him there, and, darting suddenly across the street, she marched home with her nose in the air. It would not have been quite so bad if the way home had not been past the fire-engine house where Gus had been formerly employed, and where his old pals, now seated at leisure in the doorway, were watching the whole affair with great relish. Ger-

trude refused to cast one glance at these, her one-time dancing partners, or to answer their greetings. She flounced past them, her high heels beating a quick tattoo on the pavement, her red cheeks blazing, and her long earrings waving in rhythm to her stride. Gus followed slowly, his face reddened, not by rouge, but by wrath, gripping the howling baby under one arm. He was too utterly enraged to do aught but glare helplessly at his former colleagues. And although some of them were family men and privately sympathetic, what could they do, under the circumstances, but extend cheerful inquiries for the health of himself and his family, and ask him how he enjoyed married life?

If looks could kill, many corpses would have lined the streets that day. Poor Gus! One could hardly blame him for wanting to shake Gertrude until, as he said, 'her teeth would rattle.' Even Gertrude had misgivings, after this last episode, lest she had gone too far. She was obliged to think quickly. Gus would soon be at her heels, and this time she was really afraid of him. She thought of the novels she had read, and agreed with Goldsmith, that 'when lovely woman stoops to folly,' there gets to be a point where 'the only way to give repentance to her lover and wring his bosom

— is to die.' But even in the face of instant death, Gertrude did not forget her rôle of dramatic heroine. Again a note was hastily penned and placed upon the stove, and as Gus, full of wrath, opened the door, Gertrude faced him with a box in her hand. Before he had a chance to utter what she knew was coming, she pointed tragically to the note, swallowed the contents of the box, and fell screaming to the floor.

Poor Gus — again outwitted. He looked at the note which read as follows:

DEAR FRIENDS, I am going to commit suicide, as soon as I finish this note. Gus has ruined my life, I have nothing to live for.

Sincerely

GERTRUDE

P.S. I shall drink lie. Gus has given it to me. Good-bye, and love to all. Curses on Gus.

Scrawled upon the margin of the note was an afterthought of maternal sentiment — 'Please take care of baby' — for, as Gertrude hastily recalled, no beautiful young mother dies without asking a cruel world to take care of her baby. The picture would not be complete without it.

Under the circumstances, there was, of course, nothing for Gus to do but to call in a neighbor and a doctor. The neighbor, at Gertrude's request,

telephoned to us: 'Come at once, Gertrude has just been murdered.' When we arrived, the neighbor was administering such remedies as she found recommended by the cookbook, which the doctor later supplemented with a stomach pump. How much poison she really swallowed we never knew. But if the 'lie' did not make her feel sick the stomach pump and the cookbook, between them, certainly did.

She and Gus were a very subdued couple when the affair was finally over, and Gertrude lay white and limp upon the bed. Nevertheless, there was a flicker of triumph in her eye. The little drama had been a success. Gus had been put in the wrong, and her little world was there to witness his discomfiture. The women who had gathered from the adjacent flats took up their cues as if they had rehearsed them. There were many encouraging little pats given to the invalid, and much murmuring of 'dearie' and 'girlie,' whereas nothing fell to Gus's share but lifted elbows and averted shrugs. There was nothing for him to do but to accept the rôle of the repentant husband, and to behave exactly as Gertrude had intended him to behave when she staged the scene.

The next day, after it was all over, and we were wondering what to do next, came the following

note, which seemed to relieve us of any immediate responsibility:

DEAR FRIENDS: Don't expect any news of me. Not while I live. If you had not raved like lunatics, I would not have got so mad. I have had enough of you. In fact too much. I don't think my husband likes you any too well, and I want you to know that there aren't any things on earth I loathe as much as I loathe you. I am a good wife and mother, so stay away. I never want to see any of you again in my life.

P.S. I don't expect an answer.

So this was the next act! Gertrude's creative energy was enormous. She had evidently been planning the next installment of her serial drama before she had recovered from the effects of the last. And she had decided that not Gus, but we, should play the villain's part. If she had cast us for the villain's rôle we must play it, for no one can be a part of Gertrude's life without acting in her dramas. But, despite the trouble which she gives us, neither Gus nor we will ever desert her. And if we do not desert her, it will be for the same reason. We all want to see what she will do next.

VII
IRENE AND NICHOLAS

'Compensation' is the term applied to the tendency to make up for an organic defect by an extra-nervous effort. Thus, to escape from their crushing sense of physical inferiority becomes for some people the impelling force behind all their most vigorous action.

The compensating energy which endeavors to make up to them for an organic defect, may even operate so strongly as to make them far above the average in the very skilled activity from which organic weakness might otherwise have debarred them.

VII

IRENE AND NICHOLAS

When I first saw Irene, she puzzled me. She was an extremely pretty girl, with large gray eyes and smooth pink cheeks which required no rouge. She was simple and direct in her answers, and her mental examination indicated an intelligence much above our average type, despite the fact that she had had little education.

But such tragedy in her face! She answered every question briefly, and without once changing the stoical fixation of her eyes on some distant point out of the window. Her face was too young and smooth for lines, but in some subtle manner her tense mouth and stony eyes had nothing less than anguish written over them.

I could not fathom her until, as my eye wandered over her charming person, it came to an involuntary stop — and she saw it. Her sensitiveness felt my startled glance without looking at me. A slow flush crept over her face and her lips tightened. She continued to stare out of the window, but I looked back at my paper and fiddled with my pen. Irene's left sleeve was empty. The

cuff was tucked into her coat pocket, but it was unmistakably a sleeve without an arm. It was only due to the fact that she had a pretty face that drew one's gaze that I had not noticed it before.

'How long has it been gone?' I asked.

'Two months.'

'How did it happen?'

'Wrecked in a joy-ride. Some fellas got rough and ran us in the ditch, and in three days, they took my arm.' She almost hissed the last words. Then she turned on me. 'Is there another girl in the whole world who has lost her arm? I never heard of one.' And then, 'They say I'll get damages, but I don't want damages. I only want my arm, and they can't give me that.'

In situations like this, words are futile. But as I looked at Irene's lovely face, I could not keep from saying: 'Irene, you are so pretty. Girls with ugly faces can't hide them, but you can hide your arm. An empty sleeve does not show. Most of us cannot get past your face.'

It seemed as if she had a right to some spoken recognition of her beauty since her pride had been so cruelly hurt, and for a moment a faint watery gleam of a smile did light through the gloom of her face. She knew that she was pretty and was ready to admit it. But since when have pretty

women been more resigned to mutilation than ugly ones?

Irene shook her head. 'No one sees my face. Everybody I pass stares at that sleeve. They see nothing else, and I think of nothing else. I suppose I never will,' she added, and rose. 'There is nothing you can do, you know. All I want is my arm, and you can't give it to me.'

It is strange how suffering can sharpen not only the nerves, but the intelligence. Irene was only an ignorant girl, with no training, no family, and no fortune. Yet the experience through which she had just passed had brought her so close to the realities of life, and of death, that she had the dignity and the self-possession of a woman of the world.

Yet, curiously enough, at a suggestion that we go to her room with her to help her get her suit-case, her self-possession left her. She did not want us, and the more we urged, the more excited became her refusal. To our inquiries as to how she could come to our boarding-home without some one to carry her bag, and how she could stay anywhere else without money, she burst into hysterical sobbing.

It was plain enough that there was something in that room which we must not see, and how

could we fail to guess what it was? No girl is going to shake with sobs as the self-possessed Irene was shaking, unless that mysterious something in the room is a lover.

Now we were in no mood to grudge consolation to Irene, in whatever guise that consolation might be found. Yet here she was, utterly destitute and crippled. She could not start out alone on slippery sidewalks with the sleet driving in her face unless some one helped her. And it was equally plain that, whoever her lover might be, he was not her husband, nor could he help her, or she would not have come to us. It was more likely that there were two waifs instead of one, both wretched and at their wits' end, with no consolation but each other's company. Irene's sobs doubtless meant that she dreaded being snatched by stern moralists from the only treasure which she had saved from the shipwreck of her fortunes.

It was finally arranged that Irene should be motored to the corner of her street and should go alone to her room to pack her bag, with her one arm, or with the help of whatever arms might lurk in the room. A discreet reticence was maintained, both by Irene and by us, as to the existence of the other pair of arms.

But at the assurance that no intruder would accompany her to her room, her sobs quieted down, and she drove silently with us to the corner of the street. After a period of packing which seemed the more lengthy considering the very modest dimensions of her one little bag, Irene came trudging back to the car, her head bowed against the sleet, and her empty sleeve flapping wildly behind her.

That she would never have come at all if they had had a cent between them, we were morally certain. She was proud and she was stubborn. Moreover, it was plain that she was in love. If her companion had been loyal to a girl with no money, no job, and no arm, it seemed more than likely that he too was in love. Undoubtedly their room rent was unpaid, and they had been asked to move on. Hence Irene's acquiescence. So much we could guess without asking questions. We felt that after a day or two of quiet, with a hot bath and some good meals, Irene would be ready to talk without being urged, which, indeed, turned out to be the case.

Nicholas, it seemed, was a truck driver who had lost his job. But feeling certain that the trucking business was a good one, he had decided to go into it on his own account, and he was

paying for a truck on the installment plan. He had hoped to earn enough by hauling to pay for the machine, but business had not been good, and despite his best efforts it looked as if he would lose the truck, all the money that he had put into it and all means for earning anything else. At this stage of his fortunes, he and Irene had met each other. Both were unhappy, both had been undeservedly unlucky, and both were in the mood to cling to any one who would be kind. Moreover, Irene had a room for which she had paid a month in advance. Nicholas had in the meantime been sleeping in his truck. But the weather had suddenly turned cold, and even his endurance quailed before the prospect of more nights under its chilly canvas. Moreover, he had probably got to return the truck for lack of money to pay the premiums; so, cold or warm, he must seek another shelter, and Irene had offered hers as long as it lasted.

It had lasted one month. And now neither of them had a roof, or the price of a cup of coffee and a sandwich. 'The poor fella,' said Irene, 'and me with only one arm. How can I help him? With an arm and a job, I could rent a room, and we'd live real well until he got his truck back. There's always lots of hauling in the fall if Nick could only get the chance.' It was plain that there

would be no settling of Irene's problems that did not include a settling of Nick's, and we promised to start negotiations for his truck and for her new arm, and without delay.

The first interview with the owner of the truck was satisfactory, but puzzling. The man in charge of the installment service was most sympathetic, and he agreed to give Nick the time he needed to make his payments.

'It's hard for a young fella with a family, these days,' said the kindly Irishman. 'I've been where I needed a little consideration myself.'

So Nick had a family, did he? The question remained: Was Irene his family, or did he have another one? Since Irene showed no disposition to enlighten us, and since it is one of the many disadvantages of being poor that one's private affairs must be pried into, there seemed to be no alternative but to ask her. This we did as gently as possible. Was she, or was she not, married to Nicholas? If not, did she intend to be? Did he have any other wife who would prevent it?

Irene was reticent by nature, and her misfortunes had made her more so. It was not easy for her to answer questions, and probably she would have refused to do so on her own account. But Nicholas stood a much better chance with

us to back him than he did without us, and she knew it. For his sake she admitted that she was 'sort of' married to him. At least, neither of them was married to any one else, and she was his common-law wife. But why not his legal wife if there had been nothing to prevent it?

Here it became very hard to explain, for Irene was proud and she was sensitive. She was very much in love, and she was gifted with a sense of the ridiculous. But here it was! When Nicholas came to live under Irene's roof, they decided that they must be married at once. So the license was procured, and while Irene, who was still rather clumsy with her toilette, was arranging her slight attempt at wedding finery, Nicholas had gone for a look at his truck. In the course of his inspection he had sat on a piece of scaffolding, and as he jumped off he was horrified by the dreadful sound of tearing cloth. A nail had caught in the seat of his trousers, and in his impatience to return to Irene his upward bound had been so quick that the entire seat had been torn off in one great three-cornered gash, before he realized that he was caught. There it hung, torn past redemption — and the priest waiting for them in the church. Fortunately, Irene's room was near by, but, as she said with bitter self-deprecation,

'What could a one-armed girl do for him? Could I darn it?' Their only recourse was to go to the woman who ran the rooming-house and ask her to sew him up. She was good-natured, but she was busy, and the morning was gone before she had found time to sew the edges together.

Moreover, although the patch enabled him to wear the trousers on his truck, how could he get married in them? 'We couldn't make her hurry so that we could get to the priest, for we had to tell her that we were already married, or she would not have let Nick in my room. We couldn't tell her that it was his only suit, or she would have known that we were broke, and been afraid of her rent. She might have turned us out, and you couldn't have blamed the poor woman if she had,' added Irene. 'She needed all the money she could get. She had children, and her husband was always drunk on raisin-jack. She fixed Nick up as well as she could, but she wasn't much of a tailor; and Gosh, how he looked!' Irene almost smiled as she contemplated her memory. Then she stopped talking.

That seemed to be the end of the story so far as Irene was concerned, but we ventured another faint question. 'Couldn't you have got married even if Nick did have a queer pair of trousers?

Wasn't the wedding more important than the looks of the suit?'

But here she turned on us. 'No, it wasn't more important,' she snapped. 'Don't you suppose that we wanted to be married decent like any one else? What would we have looked like — a bride with no arm, and a groom with nothing but patches on his back? How would we look at the altar, kneeling there with an empty sleeve where my wedding hand ought to be, and rags sewed in black thread all over the seat of those gray pants, and him with only one short coat that wouldn't hide an inch? Us, looking as we do now — why, they laugh at us when they come up behind. When they see my sleeve, they stop laughing, but does that make it any better?'

Irene's voice was getting higher and higher, but we could not stop her. The suppressed agony of the past few weeks was finding expression all at once, and nothing we could say would help. It was better to leave her alone until she had relieved her heart and could see life reasonably again.

'Maybe you think that a poor girl like me, who has made her mistakes, ain't got no pride,' she said, 'but I have. Nick is as good as any man, and not every man would marry a girl like me.

But we wanted to be married decent, and Nick felt so about those pants — you know how men are, they mind those things worse than women — that I wouldn't make him kneel at the front of the church and get laughed at. The poor fella, he sat with his head in his hands, and he said, "Irene, I can't support you, and I can't buy you a wedding ring, and I can't even marry you without looking like a scarecrow. I knew I wasn't much of a man," he said, "but I've never been before where the very dogs barked at me." That's what he said, and what could I say?

'If he was a scarecrow, what was I? Even a scarecrow has two arms. And if he was a poor man, what can a poor man do with a wife who can't even sew a patch on his pants? I said to him, "Nick, you needn't ever marry me till we can do it right. But you can have my roof as long as I have one, married or not" — and he can. I don't care what you say, or the priest says, or any one says. Nick's my man, and if any one blames him for anything, I'll run off and no one will find me unless it's in the morgue.'

Needless to say, Irene was in a storm of sobs by this time. She had braced herself for a denunciation of her moral standards, and the longer it seemed to delay, the more hysterical she

got. 'Scold me and get it over with,' she sobbed.

But Irene never got her scolding. It was merely put up to her that if she would like a wedding, and if Nick would like a good suit to be married in, and if she would like to be taught one-armed cookery and other domestic arts, it was all hers for the asking. She was a sensible girl, and Nick turned out to be the desirable young man we had already made up our minds that he was. So they were married by the priest, Nick looking very happy in his new suit, and Irene very pretty, as she always did.

They were soon in their two-room flat, where Nick, after his day's trucking was over, helped Irene with the supper dishes by playing to her on the accordion while she washed them. She is getting more expert at her housekeeping every day. But, curiously enough, the handicraft at which she excels is sewing. She outdoes herself in every contrivance for needlework in spite of her handicap. Ostensibly she is hemming table linen for herself and darning socks. But emotionally, every stitch is but a substitute for the stitches she was not able to put into Nick's patch on her wedding morning. Irene has a vein of obstinacy in her, and she has her standards. Those hours of suppressed fury over her helplessness bit into her

very soul. Every needle thrust relieves that fury and restores her self-respect.

When the flat is fully furnished and she is less awkward with her new arm, she even plans to help Nick make his final payments on the truck with the money which she earns at dressmaking.

VIII

I.Q. .73

I.Q. .73

Standard mental examinations express their results in terms of the intelligence quotient, which is secured by dividing the actual age into the mental age. From 1.10 to .90 comprises the quotients of those able to do good average mental work. From .90 to .80, those who are less gifted, but still normal. From .70 down are the grades of dullness through feeble-mindedness into imbecility.

I.Q. .73, therefore, indicates a grade of undeveloped intelligence, barely escaping feeble-mindedness, and from which little rational judgment can be expected. The possessor of this I.Q. compelled to earn an adult living, but with desires at conflict with his ability, becomes a social burden, unless gifted with more than the average thrift, perseverance, and willingness to learn — which, without careful training, he is hardly likely to have.

VIII

I.Q. .73

EXPERIENCE with Matilda has taught us one lesson, which is this: If you are a poor young girl, not endowed with fortune, with beauty, with good conduct, nor with intelligence — do not ask for any of these gifts, but for one boon, and that alone — a good disposition. Against the reef of a good disposition, provided it is good enough, the tides of accident and misadventure, of criticism, and even of good advice, beat in vain. They hurl themselves against it only to fall back helpless in a fury of spray and froth. But the good disposition dries quickly in the sunshine and remains as unmoved and unmovable as before.

It is certainly no laughing matter to have three teaspoons, two diamond rings, one pair of silk bloomers, and a new ten-dollar-bill found on the person of one to whom they do not rightly belong. It is hardly a matter even to smile about, but Matilda was smiling in her sweetest and most composed manner. She had been asked the usual foolish question — 'Why did you take them?' — and had made the answer that she made to most

questions, namely, that she did not know. Why does any one want diamonds, silver teaspoons, and silk bloomers? Why did the woman who owned them want to keep them? And why did she become so unbecomingly red in the face when deprived of them by Matilda? Presumably they both wanted them for the same reason. Matilda snatched them. Her employer snatched them back. Matilda understood her thoroughly, and bore her no grudge for doing what she would have done herself if she got the chance. Why could not this understanding be mutual? Matilda's good-nature was imperturbable. And her desire for attractive knickknacks which she could not afford was unquenchable. The present difficulty was that she had an extraordinary number of other pretty clothes and ornaments which her employer grudgingly admitted had not been borrowed from her wardrobe, and yet which, by no possible stretching of Matilda's weekly wages, could she have afforded. It was a dismal fact, that those in charge of her affairs had been able to make a lightning calculation of her property to know exactly how much of it she could not have paid for, and unhesitatingly they had believed the worst. It takes an excellent temper to face the charges which had rolled up against

Matilda, but, fortunately for her, she could not be ruffled. To wear a cotton apron with an ink spot on it instead of the georgette dress, velvet coat, flower hat, rhinestone buckles, satin scarf, French gloves, sunburn chiffon hose, cut-work slippers, and swagger stick, in which she felt more at home, did cause her some concern. But the spots which all these irritable and dowdy ladies were casting on her reputation elicited only the soothing smile which one gives to cranky babies.

The story that Matilda finally told, after every incoherent excuse which her amiable but not very nimble wits could fabricate, was that the elderly Mr. Stugel, the grandfather of four, the retired wholesale grocer, the impeccable owner of a neat house and garden which she had overlooked from her adjacent kitchen, had taken pity on her penniless state, and had given her an outfit of clothes and general furnishings. Only what he had omitted to give had she stolen from her employer.

'He saw me crying in my kitchen one night because they were having a dance in the front room,' she finally confessed, 'and I wasn't invited. We danced in the kitchen, and he said he'd give me some clothes if I'd stop crying — so I did.'

'That old man danced with you in the kitchen? Matilda, why will you tell such lies?'

Matilda giggled slightly at the recollection. 'He did. I'm telling ya. You ask *him*.'

And so there was nothing to do but to ask Mr. Stugel to call, and answer to the charge of conduct so indiscreet in one of his ripe years. Mr. Stugel appeared promptly in response to our invitation. He had retired from business, had no duties, unlimited leisure, and was grateful for any little episode that would give him some novel way to pass his time. He was a spruce little man, who insisted that he was sixty-nine, though it was hard to believe. He was dressed in a dapper suit with a necktie that matched his socks, and had his bald spot in the front concealed by hair carefully brushed from the rear. He entered quickly, mopped his face, and looked like a small boy caught stealing jam.

'She's right. She's right. Darned softy. Always have been. Can't bear to see them cry.'

'What's all this about dancing in the kitchen?'

Mr. Stugel's face assumed the same shamefacedly amused expression that had been on Matilda's. 'She's right. There's where we danced. No other place to do it. Going to the garage, heard the dance music. Looked in. Saw

them dancing. Heard crying in the kitchen. Looked in. Saw Tilly crying. Can't bear to see girls cry. Went in. Said we'd dance too. Could hear the music as well as in the front. She said she couldn't enjoy dancing without clothes. Said I'd get her some. Damned soft head. Always was'; and he mopped his brow again.

'But Matilda has so many things — five hundred dollars' worth at least. Do you mean to say that you gave all that money to her because you saw her crying?'

'Yes, I did. Just that soft. But not all at once. I'm an anomaly,' he added, suddenly looking up as if that explained everything. 'I'm going on seventy, but I don't feel it. Can't keep quiet. Like to bum. Play with my grandchildren, but they go to bed. My wife sits and sews. Dozes in her chair. Children go out. I can't sit still. Feel twenty-one. I'm an anomaly. Got in the habit of dropping in the kitchen to see Tilly. She's the same way. Likes to bum. So I said I'd take her out. But she hadn't any clothes. Had to get her some. Little rascal bought everything in sight. Stopped in front of a jewelry store. Wouldn't budge till I got her that watch. Said she'd stick there till she dropped. Both got to laughing. Couldn't stop. Looked like a couple of fools.

Bought the watch. Same trick with that velvet coat. Tried them all on. Made me try one on. Laughed till I was sick. Got the coat. Know she makes a fool of me — but pay money to buy tickets to a good laugh. Might as well laugh at Tilly.'

After many arguments and a drooping countenance, Mr. Stugel agreed to the dangers of getting Matilda used to the spending of so much more money than she could ever earn.

'I don't want to spend it on her. Damned expensive. But the little monkey makes me laugh or makes me cry. Can't stand either. Old softy. All right if I don't see her. All off if I do. Have a bite?' — and suddenly out of his coat-tails appeared a large box of fancy bonbons. 'Take a piece. Aw — do. Got to spend my money somehow. If I can't spend it on Tilly, got to spend it on you. Only my joke. No offense. Just to show there's no hard feeling.'

Surely it was hard on any organization to be up against two such hopelessly good dispositions. One might argue, one might scold. One might threaten, and one might even arrest. The coals of fire came back in the shape of smiles and boxes of candy. What defense against such weapons?

It became necessary to make a call upon Ma-

tilda in her next place of employment, which was in a house as far as possible from the Stugel residence. Down the road was parked a car which looked curiously familiar, and, as we turned into the drive, the arm of our elderly 'anomaly' beckoned to us from the shrubbery. He was not in the least disconcerted to see us. On the contrary. he seemed to feel that none but ourselves were in a position to appreciate what we were about to see. The driveway was torn up and a sewer was being laid by a gang of stalwart Italian laborers. But they were not at this moment laying the sewer. Far from it. To a man, they were turned laughing toward the drawing-room, whose windows stood open, and from which issued, in a nasal but sprightly voice, the 'Wabash Blues.' The melody was very much off key, and the accompaniment defies description. But the tones were recognizable as the gay voice of Matilda — of all people to be singing about blues, a malady from which she had never suffered. When, despite frantic gesticulations from Mr. Stugel, we edged around to get the view which the sewer gang was getting, we saw Matilda in a neat apron seated by the piano which she had pushed to the window. There she was singing lustily, with the added touch of a silk hat belong-

ing to the owner of the house perched jauntily over one ear. It would be expecting too much of human nature in the persons of pleasure-loving Italians to suppose that they would continue to dig sewers with Matilda in a silk hat trying to amuse them.

In our ear was the excited voice of Mr. Stugel: 'Regular chimpanzee, ain't she? Ever see the beat? Folks gone for the day. Old Johnson's hat. Seen him in it many a time. Takes Tilly to see what can be done with a hat. Great idea of costume. Real comedian, that girl. Earn a lot of money if she had any sense. Not a scrap' — and he tapped his head with a sigh.

By this time the flutter in her audience had made Matilda turn around. She saw the addition to her listeners, and she rushed out to greet us. Was she disturbed? Not at all. It took more than that to disturb Matilda. She asked us all in, including Mr. Stugel.

'Dropped around to return your shoes,' he said. 'Left them at the cobbler's. Ought to save your money. You don't need new ones. These are mended. They're all right.' He had her mended shoes with him, to be sure, but his excuses were rather vague, and he did not dare to linger behind with Tilly when we left, although it was

nothing less than cruelty to make him come. We were so much duller company. 'Give you a lift back. Just to show you bear no grudge,' he insisted. 'Yes, I did take Tilly to a show — damned little monkey. Excuse my French. Didn't she have three girls and their fellows meet us afterwards, and didn't I have to feed the whole crowd — oysters, ginger ale, everything? Such appetites — starved for a week getting ready for that feed, I'll say. Set me back forty bones. But I says to myself — I've paid more than that for my wife's parties, dull as ditchwater, stiff as a poker. Why grudge it to a bunch o' kids? Laughed my head off. Ought to calm down. Too old to laugh so hard. Sure. Come on. No hard feeling. Come now. Don't be hard on the old boy.'

It was soon after this that Matilda acquired a young man. He was, of all moths to fly into the flame of Matilda's expensive tastes, a Scotchman. It seems that Matilda on her evening out had wandered to a dance-hall, and gazed with yearning at the floor to which she had not enough money to buy a ticket. However, lack of money seldom hampered Matilda, and she sidled sociably up to a shy blond young man who was also gazing longingly at the dancers, but not because he had

no money. He made a point of having that. He had no girl, and Matilda smilingly offered her services as partner. But Andy could not dance. Matilda would teach him. So, not knowing how he got there, Andy was being shoved through foxtrot after foxtrot, dime after dime went into the ticket box, and, to top all, more dimes were spent in getting his dancing teacher home by trolley, for he came to enough, steadfastly to refuse to be blandished into a taxi. By the curious attraction of opposites, Andy continued to be fascinated by the girl who could force him to spend his money, and Matilda admired prodigiously the solid virtues of the young Scotchman, his dazzling stories of the engines which he manipulated, and his general air of respectability, so foreign to the social atmosphere in which she had been brought up.

We warned them both. We told Andy of Matilda's insatiable thirst for expensive adornment, and that the very *chic* appearance which he had admired in the dance-hall was something he would never want to pay for. In vain we pointed out to them their differences in religion, their ignorance of each other's ways and traditions, and their temperaments, like the poles asunder. Of course, Matilda had not the faintest notion of

what we were talking. But, although Andy had, he was in love, and that was an end of it.

Meanwhile, old Mr. Stugel was in a fret over the whole affair. He tried to convince us and himself that he was not jealous, but he hated to have his nose broken, none the less.

He besieged us, his only confidantes. 'Little monkey — teases me to give her a new dress. You know *me*. Try to keep out of her way. She comes up behind me on the street. Takes me to a store window. Money walks out of my pocket. Says she wants me to take her and a girl friend to a show. Get there — and who is her girl friend? That fool Andy. Too tight to buy his own tickets. Have to be the third. Tilly sits between us, and, by gum, she flirts with both! You think Andy is a little tin god on wheels. I see that. But I shan't buy dresses for *his* wife. She's set me back so much I'm ashamed of it. Let him pay her bills. Let her try to squeeze blood from that turnip if she can.'

Poor Andy tried his best to stem the tide of Matilda's purchases. He argued. We argued. Even old Mr. Stugel, in his disgust over Andy, whom he considered a great bore, made it very plain to Matilda that she had got to live on Andy's wages. No presents from him to a married

woman. Matilda merely smiled on, and by hook or crook, which is merely a figure of speech (for as far as we know she was *not* crooked in her earnings), she managed to have the latest which the shops afforded. Once it was by means of a projected trip to New York. 'Teased me out of a ticket — cashed it in, and started installments on a moleskin coat,' was Mr. Stugel's excuse. Next she developed serious lung trouble, and Mr. Stugel, all anxiety, provided her with money for treatments which she prudently turned in toward her trousseau, coughing only for his benefit when she wanted a payment. In vain these devices were exposed in her presence, and in the presence of the old man. In vain they were explained to Andy. Matilda said nothing. What she thought was, 'If he likes to spend his money, let him.' Mr. Stugel's excuse was, 'I'm the same old simp. Thought she looked so pale, I believed her this time. Just left her rouge off to give me a scare. She's been showing me how she learned that cough. You'd die laughing at the little devil.' As for Andy, he had schemes for training her, and unbounded faith in his ability to handle women. The poor moth was too singed to see or listen to anything but his flame. What were we against a siren?

In the meantime Matilda had given up her housework, which had become most distasteful to her, and had taken up a beauty course at Mr. Stugel's expense. She seemed to be unable to learn the finer points of this art, however, and she came in one day, in a new spring costume, armed with a box of perfumes. This was to be an investment with great returns. The scheme, as clearly as she could outline it, was to pay an installment on the case of perfumes (charged to Mr. Stugel for five dollars) and send one half of what she made to Chicago. She was sure that she could find the address of the firm to which she was to send this commission when she looked through her things. But it was temporarily lost.

'Swellest business deal I ever heard of,' chuckled Mr. Stugel when he was summoned and remonstrated with for this new venture. 'Never got more fun out of five dollars. Tilly runs around with her little box. Can't sell a bottle. Uses most of it up on herself. If those Chicago guys ever get a cent out of Tilly, they deserve a leather medal.' He was irrepressible. The spectacle of Matilda and her perfumes tickled him so much that our refusal to accept another box of candy could not dampen his spirits. 'Nice candy. Sorry you don't like it. Give it to some kids.

Half her sales to those guys? For every half a cent they get out of Tilly, she'll get a dollar and a half out of them. Sells a bottle and spills three on herself. If they get many agents like Tilly, they can retire from business pretty soon, and it'll be to the poorhouse. Tilly and her little box!' — he threw back his head and positively cackled with mirth.

Something had to be done with such an inveterate promoter of extravagance and bad habits, but what could we do? Matilda and her friends were all acting within the law. After her one venture into larceny, a mere suggestion that she would be obliged to steal again had always brought her elderly friend to terms. And he certainly had as good a right to throw his money away as any one else. We tried pathos. We sketched the dire future of Tilly, running Andy into hopeless debt, and herself into a situation where the frying-pan and the fire would be equally hot. Mr. Stugel, always of a sentimental turn, sighed heavily. He mopped his brow, and sighed again. 'You're right,' he moaned. 'You ladies are always right. I always tell Tilly that you're right, but I'm a softy and she knows it. If I don't play round with Tilly, what *shall* I do? I'm too active to sit still.' And he looked up helplessly like a child whose toy has been snatched away.

It was too exasperating if Mr. Stugel was to be added to our list of children needing recreation, and with some petulance in our voice we answered, 'Why spoil Tilly? If you're so active, why not practice standing on your head?'

'Don't need practice,' retorted he, and, without another word, our elderly anomaly darted to the middle of the room, placed a book on the floor, leaned over, and stood steadily erect upon his head, his face getting redder and redder, and the nickels and dimes rattling from his upturned pockets and rolling under the table.

We would have let him stay there until he dropped, except that we knew that he had meant this last trick to finish us, and so ludicrous was his appearance that we were afraid that it would have the same softening effect on us that Tilly's tricks did on him.

'Get up — or down,' we commanded sternly, and he reversed himself at once mopping his face with the comment: 'Often do it for Tilly. Wife won't let me do it for my grandchildren. Afraid I'll get apoplexy. Got to die somehow. As good a way as any. Tilly likes it, so she can clean up on the nickels. Makes me balance a few bills on the edge. If they fall out, she gets them. If they don't, gets them anyhow. Ever hear of Stugel's

gun?' he asked, panting a trifle, but otherwise unruffled by his exertion. 'Big affair. Worked by a spring. Put a man inside. Shoot him into a net. Circuses used it at one time. Made a great hit. Stugel was my uncle. He invented it. Tried it on our farm. Shot me into a haystack many a time. Thought of going into the circus myself. Was a good tumbler in a small way. Well — Well' — he sighed — 'those were the days. Getting old, but I'd enjoy that gun as much as ever. Yes, yes, those were the days,' he went on dreamily. Then he bounced up — 'Gotta go. Keep Tilly out of my sight, or I'll be the same old fool. Never mind the change. Let the woman who cleans up have it. Tilly'll get it if she don't' — and he went out leaving us in a more hopeless state than we had ever been before as regards Matilda's affairs.

By what turn of the wheel had Fortune brought such an aged Harlequin and such a scatter-brained Columbine together? And must the bewitched Scotchman be ground between them, as between the upper and nether millstone? Apparently that was to be his destiny. We could not go on protecting him forever. We argued again faint-heartedly with all of them, but as usual they had the endurance to wear us down. Moreover,

whereas our dispositions began to show some signs of wear, and Andy's stubbornness occasionally got on edge, Matilda and Mr. Stugel were as unassailable as summer clouds. Nothing touched them. Nothing could hurt them, and nothing, apparently, could stop them.

We were to leave the city soon afterward for our vacation. There was a hot spell, which had driven us with all the world into the parks, where whole families, with their collars and their shoes off, lay under the trees or dabbled in the fountains. The cold-drink man did a thriving business, and a merry-go-round, with its wheezing brass piano, was turning gayly in the midst of the green. As we sauntered past, our eyes rested on Andy, gazing sourly into the whirling throng. We did not want to accost him. We, too, were wilted by the heat, and we did not feel equal to discussing him and his fortunes, with the thermometer at 89 at 9 P.M. As we turned softly behind him to avoid his gaze, we glanced in the direction where his eyes were fixed. They were riveted upon a wooden camel in the merry-go-round, which had been so arranged that, as the riders rotated, it took on at the same time an up-and-down, a sidewise, and a forward motion, simulating very cleverly a ship of the desert well under the influ-

ence of liquor. On the camel sat Mr. Stugel, red of face, with his straw hat resting on his collar. From his open mouth burst spasmodic shouts of laughter so loud and gay that every spectator, but Andy, was laughing with him. On a neighboring hobby-horse of slightly more conservative gyrations sat Matilda. Her hair was streaming, her cut-work slippers stuck out on either side, and her hands waved a greeting to the thrifty Andy every time she passed. We took in the situation at a glance. Andy had spent all the dimes he cared to, and perhaps had taken as many rides at Mr. Stugel's expense as he thought proper. He was therefore ready for less expensive entertainment. But for Mr. Stugel and Matilda, the evening had only just begun, and poor Andy could think of nothing better to do than to stand and glare at both of them. We tiptoed warily into the throng. We were not equal to the crisis. Let them settle it themselves. We were glad that vacation was at hand, and that we could escape, leaving them to whatever midsummer madness might attack them next.

Of course, the madness which attacked them was a hasty marriage. What other outcome was possible but for Andy to ask his Matilda to share his home, and for Matilda to accept his offer with

alacrity? And what other outcome was possible for a wife, who could not master the rudiments of arithmetic, nor see the connection between arithmetic and merchandise even if she had, but to invest gayly in luxuries which Andy could not possibly afford and which plunged him quickly, remorselessly, and hopelessly in debt? And when the installment clerk, and the rent collector, and the bill-collecting agent all called at once, it was natural for a thrifty man to lose his temper and to give his wife (in the course of time) a kick as well as a scolding. And it was natural for his wife to cry, and tell him that he was cross. And when this had happened often enough, and Andy found himself powerless to explain what Matilda had no capacity to understand, it was natural for him to abandon the earning of an inadequate living and to run away. It was natural for Matilda, thoroughly sick of working for no wages, and of listening to tiresome and incomprehensible exhortations, to try larceny again, and to run away in another direction. As for Mr. Stugel, training Matilda in extravagance was one thing when she was free to play the fool, and quite another when she was not. So, after a few applications for a loan, one sight of Andy or his wife was enough to send the old man scuttling toward any point of

the compass where he could feel sure of meeting neither of them.

Of course, all this might have been avoided if Matilda could have grasped the arithmetical principles of addition and subtraction, or the geometrical axiom that the whole is no greater than its parts, or even Poor Richard's maxim that 'Honesty is the best Policy.' But she could not. If she had been blind, she could not see the railroad crossing, and if she had been deaf, she could not hear the engine whistle. As it was, she was merely dull. She could not understand bills, budgets, behavior, nor several other things.

'Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments,' and so forth. Does that include minds with I.Q. .73?

IX
DULL

DULL

'Moron' is the term applied to those persons of retarded intelligence who are on the border-line of feeble-mindedness, never exceeding in adult life a mental age of approximately twelve years, and, according to the usual definition, incapable from mental defect of competing on equal terms with their normal fellows, or of managing themselves and their affairs with ordinary prudence.

Accurate figures upon the number of persons so handicapped are not available, but it is a conservative estimate that one per cent of the entire population falls into this class, whereas, among delinquents, the estimated morons vary from ten to thirty per cent of the total number. According to certain penologists, the ten per cent of offenders who are morons give as much trouble as all the rest put together.

IX

DULL

THERE they sat — Milly, Elda, Lulu, and Sadie. All of them wanted a job, and all of them had had so many that they and we had almost lost count.

Milly was plain and Polish. She had been employed as a houseworker, but never long in one place, for she was hot-tempered and sensitive. Her appearance was heavy and uncouth, and the efforts of her various employers to teach her always offended her dignity. Two months' work usually led to a lofty exit from her kitchen and a hunt for another job. We suspected that her frequent quarrels were merely the result of rocking in her solitary bedroom after hours until she could bear the monotony there no longer. The quarrel then resulted merely as an unconscious pretext for a change of scene. With this record, how conscientiously recommend her for another job? And what to do with her if we did not?

Elda was a very different type. She wore her dingy little finery with much poise and self-satisfaction, and her rouge and her lip-stick were as extreme as she dared to have them in our

presence. Elda refused to do housework. She had no natural aptitude or training for it and utterly refused to acquire any. She insisted upon 'clerking' in a store, and had made the rounds of many of them, interspersing waitress work in cheap restaurants, where she depended mainly upon the tips. She had just passed through a regrettable episode in her life which had kept her in the hospital for a month. But the baby had died, and Elda, who had loved him fiercely for three weeks, was recovering from her loss with the same buoyancy that had carried her through the desertion of her lover. At present she was powdering her nose with considerable absorption, until such time as we could attend to her.

Lulu preferred factory work and had been employed in the knitting-mills, the wire factory, the candy shops, the men's clothing industry, the box factory, the leather shops, and I know not how many others. In the course of her various jobs she had met and married a truck driver and lived with him three months. There followed a confused tale of family differences to which relatives on both sides had contributed. Now Lulu was left with a baby, while Jim had jumped a freight for parts unknown. To find a factory job, or indeed any job at all, for a girl with a baby is

no easy matter — but Lulu had been laid off of one job and had got to have another. It must be found somehow.

The fourth visitor was Sadie, a gentle little girl who had been drifting about for years, but could give no coherent account of where she had been or what she had been doing. She had been sent back to her home on the farm from time to time, but apparently always wandered back to the city when country life began to pall. She could do housework pretty well if she were not required to do anything on schedule time. She never kept an appointment or had a plan. Although she never looked very well, no one could locate any definite malady. Her father sat by the fire and smoked. Her brother stood by the post-office steps and stared. Her mother, after a few feeble efforts about the house, sat and rocked. Sadie liked to do the same. It was merely because she preferred to do it in the city that she ran away from the farm. No one had had the energy to catch her or to keep her when caught.

If any one five feet two has had to climb a mountain with some one who is six feet two, he will remember how it feels, not only to lag behind, but to know hopelessly and breathlessly that he never *will* catch up. So with our four — and

many others like them. They had never kept up with the rest of the world, and they never expected to. They had no habit of success and no conception of it.

In the course of our conferences with them, each of them submitted amiably to a standardized mental test. One of the problems of reasoning that appears in this test is the following: 'I know a road from my house to the city which is downhill all the way to the city and downhill all the way back.'

When Veronica, a normal little runaway of ten years of age, was asked what was foolish about that statement, she tittered politely behind her handkerchief and said, 'It is foolish to think he could go down both ways.' This was one of many indications that Veronica had the reasoning powers suitable to her age.

But when Milly, Elda, Lulu, and Sadie were asked to point out the same absurdity, the responses were quite different.

Milly said, 'It is foolish to go downhill'; and being pressed for further reasons, she merely added, 'Foolish to go down to a city that is up.'

Elda, who had much more society manner and desire to please, laughed very heartily at the statement and said it was certainly very foolish.

'Why is it foolish?' asked the examiner.

'It sounds so comical,' laughed Elda.

'But why?' was the persistent inquiry.

'Because if it went to the city, naturally it went back. It's foolish to say it twice. It's the words that are so comical.' And she laughed again, full of good-nature and desire to please.

Lulu went on another line: 'Did he live by the road? It's foolish to go by the road if he lives in the city.'

And little Sadie, after some minutes of smiling silence, asked gently, 'Why did he tell her that?' and shook her head at any invitation to say more.

Another absurdity is, 'The police found the body of a girl cut into eighteen pieces; they think that she killed herself.'

'What is foolish about that?'

Again ten-year-old Veronica relapsed into her pocket-handkerchief in giggles. 'Good-*night!*' said she. 'She couldn't do it.'

But poor cross-grained Milly took another view. The problem seemed to her a personal affront. 'She couldn't get the chance. Always watching you. They'd catch her all right,' was her reaction to the problem.

Elda hardly thought it polite to laugh at so

serious an episode, and, after a good deal of repetition of the question as she fussed with her mangy little fur, she remarked that it was foolish for girls in trouble to try to kill themselves; it didn't pay.

Lulu was a skeptic. She announced that for her part she didn't believe that the police *did* find her! If they found her dead, maybe she was dead. 'But I just don't believe it!'

Sadie, as always, was reluctant to talk, but she finally ventured that 'sometimes it wasn't so foolish as people think.'

A request to point out an absurdity in the statement, 'An engineer said, "The more cars I have on my train, the faster I can go,"' elicited the following answers: Milly said, 'That's right. If a certain amount, it pulls faster than with few.' Elda said, 'One car goes as fast as ten if the engine is good.' Lulu asked, 'What makes it go?' And Sadie murmured, 'He can't have cars if he has an engine.'

Since two of the girls were twenty-one and the other two were almost old enough to vote, it was interesting to know what was their idea of the difference between a president and a king. It was hardly likely that they would have much conception of any difference when their reasoning powers

were so slight, but we had a certain curiosity to know what they would say.

All of them were ready in their responses and all of them showed a robust faith in the superiority of presidents. Milly as usual took a gloomy view. 'A president builds up, but kings mostly kill you,' was her summing-up of the situation. The more kindly Elda gave as her difference that the president gives others a chance, while the king watches the soldiers. Lulu agreed that the king was fond of war, but thought that the president limited his activities to watching the high cost of living — a somber picture, indeed, of the view from the White House windows. Sadie murmured something about a throne, and added that, though the king was older, he usually gave more parties. So much for the political outlook of the four.

A still further test of reasoning was the following: 'Why should we judge a person more by what he does than by what he says?' No particular answer was required but any reasonable answer was acceptable. Here is Milly: 'Everybody lies. You can only judge by what they say.' Lulu ventured, 'It's according to what they say.' And Sadie, 'You should do what's right.' Elda gave a light little laugh suitable for an afternoon tea and asked coquettishly, 'Read the mind?' —

an answer of the type that had always made people give Elda credit for more judgment than she had. It seemed to mean something, and yet, like all of her remarks, it just failed to have a point.

Asked to interpret the simple fable of the hare and the tortoise, and to tell what lesson might be learned from it, Milly kept to solid fact and said, 'It teaches about a hare and a tortoise.' Elda wagged her head knowingly and said, 'Bible history.' Lulu said, 'It don't pay to be a fool.' And Sadie, 'About animals.'

Yet with all this mistiness of comprehension, this thick fog through which rational ideas loomed so faintly, the girls could not be called entirely feeble-minded. They had fair memories and could do simple sums in addition and subtraction. They could read books and newspapers (although one could not but wonder what they made of what they read), and they could all use words, Elda especially using them with great fluency, although the meanings of the words were often peculiar to herself. 'Revenge' meant 'you do it,' and 'envy,' 'you give in.' 'Regard' meant 'letter received, like *au revoir*,' and 'Mars' (with a simper), 'if you're pretty and single, he "mahries" you.' 'Civil' meant 'you are not crazy,' or 'American,'

though Sadie was sure it was 'big' because the Civil War was big.

All the girls could analyze a simple comparison of two substances and say why wood and coal were alike. 'You burn 'em,' was their response. But when it came to noting any similarity at all between three materials such as wool, cotton, and leather, Milly could get no further than that cotton was made from scraps of wool, and the others shook their heads.

Lulu could remember some arithmetic, but how could she be expected to live within her husband's income when she reckoned in terms of time a sum whose answer was thirty-five cents and gave two years as her result?

How can Elda, with her red cheeks and her ready if witless responses, fail to attract another lover as faithless as her first? In what terms shall one preach thrift or chastity to the dim little mind of a twenty-year-old girl whose definition of 'justice' is 'peace,' 'because I went to a justice of the peace'; whose definition of 'charity' is first 'wagon,' and who, when informed that it is not the same as 'chariot,' tried again and says, 'You've got control'? In what parables shall one preach to Sadie, whose analysis of the lesson to be learned from the fable of the milkmaid who counted her

chickens before they were hatched was, 'Learn children'?

Yet Milly and Lulu, Elda and Sadie all are here and all must earn their livings until they marry. After they marry, they must either get their husbands to support them or support themselves. They will probably try both methods, and find both equally difficult. In the meantime they must live, eating as much and dressing in more or less the same fashion as the rest of us. They must have a room to live in, and they must live with other girls so that they will not be lonesome. They must have a place to entertain the lovers whom they are sure to attract, and something to entertain them with, and some one to show them how to do it suitably. They must be helped patiently in the long task of paying their bills. They must be encouraged to refrain from quarrels and lies and profanity and light-fingeredness and dirty stories, and to substitute for these good manners, truth-telling, honesty, and an appreciation of wit that is not obscene. This is an uphill road for girls who did not learn such lessons in their childhood and who are not very quick and adaptable at getting new ideas, and it is often uphill work for their teachers.

Many are the places of refuge for a girl who

is rich and dull, and the girl who is poor but bright is finding more open roads every year. But the girl who is not gifted either in her mind or in her purse, and whose environment has steadily exploited all her weaknesses, needs a consideration that she has seldom received because she could never pay for it. Yet she and her brothers are with us in vast numbers. Have they a right to live? If so, how can we help them to live safely?

X

THE TWO MARGARETS

THE TWO MARGARETS

Imitation is the instinctive tendency to copy the behavior of those whom we consciously or unconsciously regard as models. It is a persistent and universal phenomenon, beginning in infancy; and the whole educability of later life, whether for good or bad, depends upon this trait. Whenever one individual shows superiority of any kind, others are restless until they imitate him, and in social life one large mass of people is always engaged in imitating the fashions of those whom it admires as leaders, whether or not the fashions are desirable for themselves.

X

THE TWO MARGARETS

THERE was excitement throughout the women's dormitory that evening. In the upper rooms where the students lived and in the maid's kitchen in the basement, the air was vibrant with anticipation and festivity. For once the students and the maids agreed upon the desirability of an early dinner eaten with dispatch, and with no dawdling over the dessert. In fact none of the girls who were going to the Prom stayed to eat the dessert. Only the wallflowers, whose blooming was restricted to the dormitory and the classrooms, remained in the dining-hall to dispose of their pie, which was carelessly shoved to them by the middle-aged cook through the pantry window. Although many of the girl students were going to the Prom, and a number of the girl waitresses were going to the Benefit Dance at Mechanics' Hall, interest was centered in each group about one person — Margie Crane, a junior, who with Jack Randall was to lead off in the grand march at the Prom, and Greta Klamm, the pantry girl, who had been chosen with Jim Riksla to lead in the exhibition dancing at the Benefit.

Both girls were beautiful dancers, and the idols of their respective sets. In fact they bore a curious resemblance to each other in their persons and their temperaments. Margie was a vigorous blooming girl, with yellow bobbed hair, and muscles developed by the tennis and swimming at her father's country place. She was well-formed and lithe, used to admiration and to doing as she pleased. She accepted her position as college queen with the careless assurance of long habit. She took as her natural right the crowds of boys clamoring around her dance card, the softened looks of the young instructors who could not flunk her, and the adoration of the freshman girls who sent her anonymous flowers, and then gazed at them so fixedly when she wore them that she could hardly fail to guess their origin. Such was Margie, the social leader of the college.

And Greta by a different route had arrived among her friends at somewhat the same enviable height. She, too, was vigorous and well-formed, with yellow hair, and the freedom of movement she had gained in her father's hayfield and truck garden, before she had sought her fortune in the city. If the young instructors melted at Margie's glance, so did the vegetable man, the janitor, the postman, and the gardener at Greta's smile,

when she was in friendly mood. She made no more effort to gain this popularity than did Margie. She knew that the handsome iceman who swung the huge slabs of ice so easily to his shoulders for the dormitory refrigerators was as famous for his dancing as for his other exploits at the Czech Athletic Club. He and she would make a striking couple for the Benefit exhibition. One glance would secure him for her partner — which it did. It was the same variety of glance which had enabled Margie to capture the most prominent man in college as her escort for the evening. Both girls were somewhat spare of words, but wonderfully skillful in their glances and in the utter self-confidence and imperiousness which these glances expressed. They were not in the least given to analytic introspection, but they recognized this kindred quality in each other and acknowledged each other as peers. Each felt in a subconscious kind of way that she understood the rôle played by the other girl, and that, had Fate reversed their destinies, each could be understudy for the other without an effort. Margie had a stubborn way of giving her old evening dresses to Greta instead of to worthy under-class girls who needed them more than Greta did.

Only the week before, Greta had been washing

the windows in Margie's room, while Margie, having spurned every eager freshman offer of assistance, was trying to marcel her own hair. Margie waved, and Greta polished in silence for some time, then Margie remarked:

'Hear you've got a dance on, Greta.'

Affirmative grunt from Greta.

'Got that blue dress yet, or need another?' went on Margie, squinting at her profile.

Greta shrugged her shoulders — 'Got to get another. The rain finished it last night.'

'Rain?' asked Margie, surprised; 'I thought that fellow had a Dodge — the grocer with the gold teeth, I mean.'

'Yes — that's the one,' answered Greta. 'He has — but I walked home.'

Margie turned and looked at her with a slight laugh — 'Smart Aleck, eh? He must have been pretty fresh if you walked home in *that* rain.'

'He was,' assented Greta laconically.

'How did you get in that late?' went on Margie.

'Annie,' answered Greta, and continued her polishing.

Margie lounged over to her closet and began an absorbed overhauling of its contents. After some ten minutes' study of her wardrobe, during which

Greta finished the windows and began to dust the floor, Margie advanced with a green chiffon over her arm — 'Would that do, Greta?' she asked. 'It's not like new, but I'd wear it myself if I didn't have a new one.'

Would it do! Even a season's wear of Margie's dresses left them far more desirable than anything Greta could buy on the installment plan, which was necessarily her only method of buying anything. She held it up against her before the mirror, and the yellow hair which had set it off on its first wearer did so equally well on its second. Any freshman girl receiving such a gift from Margie would have smothered her in rapturous gratitude. Greta merely threw it over her arm, picked up her pail and said, 'Thanks.'

Margie resumed her marcel iron. Then, as Greta neared the door, she called — 'Say, Greta.'

Greta paused in the doorway.

'You'd better watch out with those fellows, you know,' she commented. 'Sometimes they get rough.'

Greta nodded. 'You've said it,' she agreed, and shut the door behind her.

Now that the evening for the parties had arrived and dinner was disposed of, the upper floors of the dormitory were in an orgy of hair-

curling, last-minute dress alterations, flowers arriving in long boxes, and excited scurries from one room to another. As the hour wore on, and the girls emerged one by one as finished products into the corridor, they congregated in Margie's room, to have a final inspection of each other, and a delicious last-minute discussion of the gayety ahead of them. Here the most dazzling crowd of curled, perfumed, and rouged young belles were certain to be collected, and the gossip to be most spicy and authentic. The chatter waged violently, and clustered as usual about Margie, the most popular girl in the room, although true to form Margie said nothing herself, but devoted herself with absorbed and wrinkled brow to the study of her person in the looking-glass. From every possible angle the young Diana in silver cloth and brilliants scrutinized her slim young shape in the mirror, and then, suddenly catching a glimpse of Greta descending from the maids' attic in her second-hand green chiffon, she called out — 'Hey there, Greta, that belt's not on right. Let me fix it.'

Greta entered the room without a trace of embarrassment and surveyed her belt in the glass. 'I thought it was wrong,' she said, 'but the girls upstairs couldn't fix it.'

'I can,' said Margie, and she bent frowning over Greta's costume with the same absorption that she had over her own. She was curiously determined that Greta should be the belle of her ball, as she intended to be of her own. Margie had watched Jim at his ice-wagon duties that morning from her window, had watched and admired his graceful vigor as any observer must. She felt the age-old craving of royalty to mingle incognito with the merry-makers of another social group. But since this was impossible, she dimly felt that Greta and Jim were to be the shadows, the doubles, of Jack and herself at the Benefit that night, and that Greta must do credit to her rôle.

They were a picture — these two yellow-haired dryads of different social backgrounds. Margie, with a refinement of feature, hand, and ankle which Greta could not boast; but Greta in her turn possessing a wild opulence of bloom and a primitive vigor which even tennis and swimming could not quite give her more cultivated sister. Greta gazed at herself in the glass, Margie snipped away at the belt, and the talk continued about them. Petting — it seemed — was the absorbing topic of the hour. Was it or was it not defensible? That was what the younger girls wanted to know. There was certain to be a considerable amount of

it before the evening was over — on that point all were agreed. But the opinion of the popular upper-class girls was solicited by the freshmen on the finer points of the subject. How *much* should one pet? Was it more sporting to do it with all? Or more refined to pet with but one? Did that mean, one at a time? Or one for all time? Or was there safety in numbers? Was one kiss — say — at parting, really petting? Or did it mean more than that? Did open petting in the corners of the dance-hall show a better spirit because not hidden? Or did it, on the contrary, look vulgar, and was the place for affectionate demonstration in the dark on the way home? In reality was petting any sign of affection at all? Or was it merely a gesture, a sign of freedom from restraint, and to be thoroughly understood as such on both sides? Occasionally, as the talk surged about them, Margie and Greta caught each other's eye, and an electric glance as of experts among amateurs flashed between them. Obviously Greta could not have joined in the discussions of an alien group, even had she chosen, and Margie did not choose to speak. Both girls listened with a restraint more oppressive than speech — nevertheless, they listened.

'Well, I certainly should not advise a freshman

not to pet,' announced a popular junior decisively. 'It's the only way to be sure of dates. *Pet*, but keep your head, is the way I look at it; that is, if you don't want to be a wallflower.'

Half a dozen adoring freshmen, who hoped sincerely to avoid being wallflowers, listened with attention.

'There's Suzanne. She has lots of dates. Do you think *she* pets?' asked one of them timidly. Suzanne was a freshman girl who was getting much upper-class attention from the boys.

One of the juniors shouted with laughter — 'Pet? Does Suzanne pet? If you had been at the football dance, I guess you would have thought she did.'

'I heard she was terrible,' volunteered another.

'She overdoes it,' said the junior; 'she'll get her pace with a little more experience.'

'I know some girls who have dates, and I'm sure they don't ever pet at all,' continued the freshman.

'No one said you couldn't have dates with *somebody*, *some* of the time, without petting,' answered the junior judiciously. 'The point is you can't be sure of them all the time with the men you want. And who wants to sit around speculating on her chances of a date to a dance, or on hav-

ing to go with a prune? I don't, for one. I want to be able to plan ahead, and be sure of my engagements. I *have* to, to get my clothes in shape. Those girls who don't pet — even the best of them — get left in the lurch half the time. They never know where they stand, unless they have a steady, and they have to pet to keep *him*.'

The theme continued to develop vigorously among the guests until one of the bolder juniors remarked — 'For goodness' sake, Marge, don't be so cagey. Can't you give us some line on all this?'

'I'm busy,' answered Margie, her mouth full of pins.

'My mother says it's a dangerous game,' continued the prudent freshman.

'Your mother says that, does she?' laughed the junior, pinching her cheek.

'Not so far wrong,' commented Margie, and Greta stiffened perceptibly under her fingers.

'Do you really think so?' asked the chorus, in a flutter now that the oracle had spoken.

'Of course it is,' continued Margie; 'everything is dangerous that's any fun — racing, diving off a canoe, surf-board riding, skiing — anything.'

'Too dangerous?' shuddered a romantic adorer, in a thrilling whisper.

'Any good game is dangerous unless you know the rules and can handle it. If you can't, you'd better let it alone,' answered Margie with a slight sneer, and an extra jab at Greta's belt.

'Don't you think that college students ought to keep up higher standards than other girls and let petting alone?' asked a thoughtful girl whose escort had failed her, and who was therefore missing the party.

Margie shrugged her shoulders — 'You're young but once, and a long time dead — it's up to you to get the most out of life, — There,' she added, shoving Greta away and looking her over, 'that belt is right for once — doesn't Greta look nice, girls?'

The girls murmured polite assent. They were not in the least interested in Greta, and thought the green chiffon much too good for her. Greta stole a shy admiring look at Margie — 'Thanks,' she said and disappeared into the corridor.

At this point the sound of the bell below indicated that the first escort had arrived, and that soon they would be coming thick and fast. With excited squeals the girls ran to their rooms to await their summons. The hall below was soon crowded with sleek and shining young men in dress-suits, and the drive filled with honking

horns and grinding brakes. Just as Margie and Jack Randall strolled down the drive to get into his car, they met Greta and Jim headed for the car he had rented for the evening. Jim was not an iceman for nothing. His shoulders were as broad and his step as springy as the best of the college athletes. As the two couples passed each other, they smiled involuntarily. All of them were in the same mood. The young men were like two spirited Indian braves just returned from a successful hunt, and the girls were like squaw princesses as full of life as themselves and as eager to join in the dance of celebration. The eyes of all four were reckless. The tom-toms had been beating in their brains for hours and were to beat for hours more. Physically all four of them were superb, and they knew it — their glance at each other admitted the fact about each other, and about themselves. In a moment they had passed, climbed into their respective cars, and driven away.

Quiet settled upon the dormitory for several hours. Scattered groups of uninvited girls chatted in a desultory fashion, parted, and went to bed. Annie and the other older maids trudged up the attic stairs, and soon even their creakings ceased. The lights were low in the halls. The tides of life

were elsewhere. Not until long after midnight did the first stragglers begin to return. They came in groups joking and whispering, and then in an uproarious crowd. There was much laughing from the darkened piazza, and much scurrying on the gravel. But even this died down after a time. The corridors were filled with the chattering girls, whom the proctors patiently quieted down and saw one by one into their rooms. They checked them off. Every one seemed to be in but Margie. Two of the proctors whispered together in the hall, and, with that second-sight peculiar to their kind, two little freshman girls listened to them through their partly opened door, and whispered excitedly to each other — 'She's not in. They don't know where she is.'

As they peered through the crack at the worried proctors, a girl in evening dress from another dormitory tore up the stairs and clutched them by the arm.

'Come, quick,' she whispered wildly. 'You've got to come! It's Margie.'

She dragged the bewildered girls down the stairs and into the night, now at its blackest. Two little shapes wrapped in raincoats scampered after them at a discreet distance. Down the drive they hurried to a clump of trees where a car was

standing. A man and a woman seemed to be in the front seat. As the girls approached, they could hear first a man's fierce undertone and then a girl's hysterically muffled whisper. Both of them appeared to be struggling to get hold of the steering-wheel. There was a rapid interchange of 'Let go, I tell you!' and, 'Look out, some one will hear you!' followed by a rustle approaching a scrimmage, and then some profanity in the man's voice hissed between hushed screams.

The girls stood petrified with fright. They could hardly move. Then the more self-possessed of the older girls urged them on. 'Some one is trying to rob her — He'll kill her if we don't go.' They dashed around the corner of the car just in time to see Randall with a final wrench thrust Margie back in the seat and grasp the steering-wheel. With a quick lurch the car started down the drive. It was but a moment, but they could see that it was not the Randall whom they knew. His face was flushed, his hair awry, and he appeared thoroughly beside himself with anger, drink, or some combination of emotions less easily classified. So accustomed were the girls to Margie's social domination, to her reticence, and her ability to take care of herself, that their voices froze in their throats. They did not dare cry for

help and have the whole college about their heels. She would never forgive them, that they knew very well. As Margie had said a few hours before — 'Don't play the game unless you know it'; and they admitted they knew nothing about it, were utterly beyond their depths, with no judgment to meet an event without parallel in their experience. They stood helplessly looking after the retreating car — when from some bushes farther down the drive a group of boys suddenly made their appearance and darted after it. By the glare from the headlights the girls could see Jack's roommate jump to the running-board and another form leap into the back seat. The car suddenly stopped amid confused shouts and the noise of breaking glass. The girls instinctively drew back among the trees as a slender form in an evening cloak hurried out of the car and ran past them into the dormitory. They could hear behind them that a fist-fight was in progress which ended in a peculiar hoarse cry, more like an animal than a human being. Then the headlights went out and there was utter silence. The proctors stole back into the dormitory, but the freshman girls stood for one moment clutching each other with delight before they followed them. Here was life! Here was adventure! Here were thrills! This was a

college education! They fairly hopped up and down in ecstasy and hugged each other in the joy of the moment. Then prudence prevailed, and huddled in their raincoats they stole into the dormitory a few moments before it was locked for the night.

Fifteen minutes later, another car started up the drive. It also stopped, and there was another excited argument, which ended with a man's decisive thrusting of a girl into her seat, and a recapture of the wheel. But this time no audience was interested in her fate. There were no proctors watching in alarm, and no boys darted from the clump of trees to stop the car. It wheeled suddenly and disappeared from the driveway into the night.

The Prom had been on a week-end and there were no classes until Monday. Some of the revelers did not get up at all until the next afternoon, meals were irregular, and many students went out of town. Margie did not emerge until evening, and when she did Fortune was again kind to the two little freshmen. With their own eyes they saw Margie descend the stairs, they saw Jack Randall meet her in the hallway — once more his old correct self. They saw him speak to her in a

reserved way and press a note into her hand, and they saw her run upstairs and into her room to read it. 'He is apologizing; he is telling her he will never touch another drop,' they thrilled into each other's ears, as they went in to dinner.

Margie belonged at their table, and she strolled in when the meal was half over. She, too, was her old composed self. The talk was, of course, wholly on the Prom — but in the midst of it Margie suddenly glanced toward the pantry and said — 'Where's Greta?'

No one had been thinking of Greta, and no one knew or cared where she was.

'Oh, she's around somewhere, I suppose,' said one of them carelessly.

'No, she isn't,' said the matron who sat at the table — 'she didn't come in last night, and I told her she would have to go.'

'She didn't come in?' said Margie, staring.

'Not until this morning,' said the matron. 'She said she had stayed with a girl friend, and probably she did, but I can't put up with any more from Greta — I have got to know where the help are.'

'Where will she go?' persisted Margie.

The matron shrugged her shoulders — 'Oh, she'll get another place — she's good help, but

too wild for us to bother with,' she answered easily.

Two years later all was festivity at the Crane home. Margie and Jack Randall were to be married, and the house was full of wedding presents, guests and caterers. A call had been sent to the employment agency for a supply of expert women to help the wedding party with the final arrangements, and several of the maids had just arrived and were making themselves useful in the guest-rooms. Margie, after the most expensive milliner in the city had failed to arrange her veil to suit her, had driven her petulantly out of the room. 'There — you go and fix up mother. I know just how I want this veil and I am going to arrange it myself. I know what I want better than you do'; with which the discomfited *modiste* had been obliged to retire, and Margie, with the expertness of years of study of her own person, was adorning herself in her own way.

As she sat before her dressing-table shifting the folds of her bridal veil, one of the maids from the employment agency stepped into the room with a package in her hand — 'Excuse me, Miss Crane,' she said, 'but Mr. Randall said it was very special'; and she laid the package on the dressing-table.

Margie picked it up eagerly. 'It's Jack's wedding present,' she said, and then, catching a glimpse of herself in the glass, she stared at her reflection in it and at that of the face beside it. 'Greta!' she gasped, dropping the package.

'Yes, Miss Margie,' said Greta, her pale face staring back into the mirror at Margie's reflection and at her own beside it.

The two faces no longer resembled each other: Margie was rosy, her lips were parted, and her eyes were shining with excitement. Greta's face was thin and drawn over her cheek-bones, her skin was waxy, and her eyes were dead. She was a wan, scarcely recognizable double of the once blooming Greta.

Margie turned from the mirror and looked her in the face — 'What's the matter, Greta? Are you sick?'

Greta nodded slightly.

'What is it?' asked Margie.

'Lungs, I guess — I don't know,' answered Greta indifferently, shrugging her shoulders.

'I never knew where you went when you left the dormitory. I asked, but no one knew,' went on Margie. 'Where were you?'

Greta's face went utterly impassive — then she flushed suddenly and her eyes filled with

tears. She turned her head away to hide them.

Margie jumped up from her chair and seized her by the shoulders. 'You've been in trouble, haven't you, Greta?' she whispered; 'that's why you're sick. Is there anything I can do? Can't I do anything?' she repeated insistently, and she shook the girl slightly in her impatience as Greta remained silent.

'Not *now*, you can't,' said Greta, slowly turning and looking her in the eyes.

Margie stared at her, puzzled — and then a little shyly, as not wanting to be too obviously bridal, 'Did you marry that Jim of yours?' she asked.

Greta shook her head and pressed her lips together in a hard line.

'That's all off, then? Well — you always had plenty to choose from, you needn't worry,' added Margie, more lightly — but as two tears slowly rolled down Greta's grim face, her tone changed. 'He isn't dead, is he, Greta?' she asked sympathetically. 'What's the matter? Where is he?'

Greta's voice was stony, 'I don't know where he is now. He *was* in the Pen,' she answered.

Margie gasped. 'In the Pen?' she reiterated. There was a blank pause. 'I didn't know he was that sort. It's lucky you didn't marry a man like

that, after all,' she said in a relieved tone to break the interval.

But Greta turned on her: 'He was no worse than I was. He was no worse than — than *any* fellow, than *your* fellow was. He just didn't have any friends to stop him that night — and I was like you said — I couldn't play the game. I thought I could.' She stopped suddenly as if she had said too much. But it was evident that her whole self was aroused to defend her faithless lover from the charge of being different from other men, who under happier circumstances had been more loyal.

Margie stared at her, stupefied, and then a glimmer of recollection coming over her she blushed a deep crimson, and shrunk away from Greta. 'That night of the Prom — were you there? Did you see us?' she whispered.

'Sure we did, we were parked down the road a way,' answered Greta, as if she had been harboring a grudge for two years and was anxious to be rid of it. 'Jim was no worse than your man was, but he had no friends to stop his foolishness like you did. He says it was all my fault. Maybe it was; I don't know. We were no different from the rest of you, but it turned out different,' she ended in a lifeless voice.

Now it was Margie's turn to be on the defensive for her lover. 'Jim must have been worse than Jack. No one goes to prison for what Jack did. He just lost his head, that was all. He was sorry for it afterward.'

'So was Jim,' answered Greta dryly. 'He's had reason to be sorry, God knows, and so have I.'

'But there was more to it with you two than with us, you know there was, Greta — you've no right to say there wasn't,' argued Margie reproachfully. She felt that she could not bear it if Greta had suffered and she had gone scot free for the same indiscretion.

'Yes, there was more to it before we got through, lots more,' assented Greta gently. 'But there wouldn't have been. We were never with a tough crowd before. Jim was a good fellow before that night.' Then, as she turned away toward the door, she added as if to herself, 'But he's no good any more. Neither of us is.'

There was a sudden clatter of wedding guests in the hall, and a chorus from outside of 'Where's Margie? We want the bride,' accompanied by a loud knock.

'In a minute,' called Margie through the door, and she placed her back against it facing Greta. The old dormitory feeling had just swept over

her, that she and Greta were the same girl masquerading in different costumes, that each was as the other would have been could the princess and the pauper have changed their rôles. The only difference was that now she seemed in an undefinable way to be the pauper and Greta the princess unlawfully kept from her rights.

'Can you use any of my clothes, Greta?' she asked, almost imploringly. 'You used to look lovely in my things.'

Greta shook her head. 'I don't go out much,' she said, and then, with a reckless toss of her head — 'I'm only on parole myself,' she added doggedly. 'You don't have many nights out when you are on parole.'

'Parole from where?' asked Margie in a stifled voice.

Greta, still flushed, gazed steadily at her as if she were the innocent and the bride were the condemned.

'I told you I was as bad as Jim was,' she explained simply as if to a child who would not understand. 'If you college people slip a little, your friends pull you back. Me and Jim, we just slipped the rest of the way.' Then she added with a kind of grim humor — 'I guess I wore your ideas like I did your clothes, and I couldn't afford either

of them. Some one has to pay, and girls like me ain't got the price.'

She turned to go, but Margie clutched her by the shoulder and held her. 'You think it is our fault, don't you, Greta? If we had been different, then you would have been?' She felt that she must at least take the blame for Greta's mischance, since she had escaped her punishment.

'I don't know *whose* fault it is — it just happened. That's all I know,' returned Greta lifelessly, as if she had long passed the stage of excusing herself or of condemning others.

'Let us in, Margie; we want to see the bride,' came in an insistent chorus from the hall, accompanied by loud knocks. Then one voice alone, a young man's voice — 'Won't you even let *me* in, Margie?'

Margie's face softened. She turned toward the door, and then to Greta, who stood stiffly with paling cheeks listening to the voice of the bridegroom, so like the one whom she had lost. Suddenly Margie threw her arms around the girl's neck. 'It's not fair. You and Jim ought to be where we are,' she whispered, almost sobbing. She clung to Greta's rigid, unyielding form for a moment, and then, recovering her self-possession, she turned to the door and opened it. The crowd

of wedding guests, with the handsome young bridegroom in the rear, burst into the room with laughter and questions.

'What are you up to, all alone, Margie? Not changing your mind, are you? What's the matter with your veil? It's all mussed up. You look nervous,' they shouted laughing — and through their midst the black-uniformed maid from the employment agency slipped unnoticed and disappeared into the hall.

XI

PETTING AND THE CAMPUS

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It is generally agreed that the three major instincts are those of Sex; Parental Love; and Self-Preservation, or Egotism. Without the continuous operation of the powerful sex instinct, the race would not have survived. But it is equally true, that healthy family and social life requires some regulation of the sex impulse and a utilization of surplus sex energy for other purposes than its direct instinctive satisfaction. The manner in which sex energy is conserved and utilized for indirect as well as direct creative purposes is a fair index of the cultural development of an individual or of a group.

XI

PETTING AND THE CAMPUS

It is as far from my purpose here to point with pride to the good old days before the War, when all of us were models of decorum, as it is to view with alarm the present period when decorum is no longer a model. It is merely an attempt to analyze a mode of behavior prevailing among many young people to-day — a behavior which may be old in its essence, but which has a new name and a new point of view characteristic of the times.

For several years I have been interested in an organization devoted largely to the protection of young girls, whose rash 'petting' (among other things) often leads to such pitiable results. One day a young girl entered our office and looked around cautiously as she closed the door behind her. She announced herself as a recent graduate from a large Eastern college, and asked whether she, as well as the untrained working-girl, had a right to consult us for vocational placement. When she was alone with me, I asked her in what she was interested, and again she looked around

with caution. Then in a stage whisper she said:

'I want you to tell me what to train myself for, but I warn you, I shan't want to do it. I want to do just one thing.'

'Then why not do it?' was my natural question.

'Because I can't. I would if I could.'

'What is it, and why can't you do it?'

She leaned forward. 'I want to get married. That's all I want to do, and I can't do it because I haven't any one to marry.'

Any one who has talked to girls on vocational guidance is familiar with the glassy look which comes over their eyes, which says as plainly as words, 'We will train just long enough to earn our living till we get married, and not a moment more.' But here was a girl who said flatly, without subterfuge, that she could feel no interest in a training she hoped never to use.

'What's the trouble?' I asked. 'If you want a husband so much, what seems to be the difficulty about getting one?'

'Because I don't know how to pet,' she said. 'Just once, coming home from a party with a fellow I didn't know very well, we petted on the back seat of the car. I sat in his lap all the way home. I never had such a good time in my life. But the next day he didn't call, and I never saw

him again, so I suppose I didn't do it right — too much or too little — or something!'

'Perhaps you overdid it,' I ventured. 'It doesn't sound to me as if you were too backward.'

'I think so myself,' she admitted frankly. 'I think I scared him off, and since then I haven't had another chance. They tell me I ought to sublimate my feelings, and my teachers suggested that I should try to be a matron of an orphan asylum — sublimate on the children. Do you think I could?'

'If any one ever got a husband out of an orphan asylum, I never heard of it,' I answered. 'Why not consult the census, pick out a State where the men outnumber the women, get any work you can find in that State, and hope for the best?'

'I believe I will try,' she answered with some enthusiasm, as she left. Several letters have come from her which indicate a happier state of mind, although as yet no wedding announcements have celebrated her success.

The story of this interview has been given with some detail, because it illustrates a frankness in admitting the state of one's feelings which would have been difficult if not impossible to a former generation. When many of us were in college,

whereas our subconscious may have been in the same yearning state as that expressed by this young woman, at least it was Sub — whereas now one might almost say that it is Super. Last summer I was at a student conference of young women comprised of about eight hundred college girls from the Middle Western States. The subject of petting was very much on their minds, both as to what attitude they should take toward it with the younger girls (being upper-classmen themselves), and also how much renunciation of this pleasurable pastime was required of them. If I recall correctly, two entire mornings were devoted to discussing the matter, two evenings, and another overflow meeting.

So far as I could judge from their discussion groups, the girls did not advise younger classmen not to pet — they merely advised them to be moderate about it, not lose their heads, not go too far — in fact, the same line of conduct which is advised for moderate drinking. Learn temperance in petting, not abstinence.

Before the conference I made it my business to talk to as many college girls as possible. I consulted as many, both in groups and privately, as I had time for at the conference. And since it is all to be repeated in another State this summer, I

have been doing so, when opportunity offered, ever since. Just what does petting consist in? What ages take it most seriously? Is it a factor in every party? Do 'nice' girls do it, as well as those who are not so 'nice'? Are they 'stringing' their elders, by exaggerating the prevalence of petting, or is there more of it than they admit? These are samples of the questions I have asked, and have heard them ask each other in the discussions where I have listened in.

One fact is evident, that whether or not they pet, they hesitate to have any one believe that they do not. It is distinctly the *mores* of the time to be considered as ardently sought after, and as not too priggish to respond. As one girl said — 'I don't particularly care to be kissed by some of the fellows I know, but I'd let them do it any time rather than think I wouldn't dare. As a matter of fact, there are lots of fellows I don't kiss. It's the very young kids that never miss a chance.'

I recall a wedding at which I was once a guest. It was on the island of Crete, and because of local custom the symbolism of marriage by capture had to be carried out in the ceremony. Our friend Evangelia, who had flirted quite openly and enthusiastically with Giorgio, had modestly to pretend to be prostrated at the idea of marrying

him. Although a robust girl, custom decreed that she should be carried by stout grooms over the threshold of her father's house, in an apparently fainting state of protest against her wedding. Only a faint wink at us out of the side of her eye, as she was borne past us, indicated that Evangelia was not quite so limp as she was obliged to pretend she was — in fact, not half so nervous as poor pale Giorgio waiting for her at the church. It was merely the *mores* of the situation. Giorgio must act bold, although his knees were shaking, and Evangelia must simulate a collapse which she was far from feeling. Apparently the *mores* of to-day is that no one simulates anything — in itself a fine gesture of frankness.

I wonder why veteran educators like Dr. Charles W. Eliot feel it necessary to urge college women toward matrimony. From my experience with them, I should say that never was such advice less necessary. The desire to marry and the fear lest one fail to do so is in my opinion the principal reason why petting is so prevalent and so unashamed. The economic pressure of to-day is so strong that young men are cautious about assuming the financial care of a family. The wave of popular feeling among the girls is away from the pursuit of independence, which was the goal

of yesterday, to the desire for romance and marriage which has been their goal since marriage was invented. Since petting leads to 'dates,' and dates lead to more dates and to real romance, one must pet or be left behind.

That petting should lead to actual illicit relations between the petters was not advised nor countenanced among the girls with whom I discussed it. They drew the line quite sharply. That it often did so lead, they admitted, but they were not ready to allow that there were any more of such affairs than there had always been. School and college scandals, with their sudden departures and hasty marriages, have always existed to some extent, and they still do. But only accurate statistics, hard to arrive at, can prove whether or not the sex carelessness of the present day extends to an increase of sex immorality, or whether, since so many more people go to college, there is an actual decrease in the amount of it, in proportion to the number of students. The girls seemed to feel that those who went too far were more fools than knaves, and that in most cases they married. They thought that hasty and secret marriages, of which most of them could report several, were foolish, but after all about as likely to turn out well as any others.

Their attitude toward such contingencies was disapproval, but it was expressed with a slightly amused shrug, a shrug which one can imagine might have sat well on the shoulders of Voltaire. In fact the writer was torn, in her efforts to sum up their attitude, between classifying them as eighteenth-century realists, or as Greek nymphs existing before the dawn of history!

I sat with one pleasant college Amazon, a total stranger, beside a fountain in the park, while she asked if I saw any harm in her kissing a young man whom she liked, but whom she did not want to marry. 'It's terribly exciting. We get such a thrill. I think it is natural to want nice men to kiss you, so why not do what is natural?' There was no embarrassment in her manner. Her eyes and her conscience were equally untroubled. I felt as if a girl from the Parthenon frieze had stepped down to ask if she might not sport in the glade with a handsome faun. Why not, indeed? Only an equally direct forcing of twentieth-century science on primitive simplicity could bring us even to the same level in our conversation, and at that, the stigma of impropriety seemed to fall on me rather than on her. It was hard to tell whether her infantilism were real, or half-consciously assumed in order to

have a child's license and excuse to do as she pleased. I am inclined to think that both with her and with many others, it is assumed. One girl said, 'When I have had a few nights without dates, I nearly go crazy. I tell my mother she must expect me to go out on a fearful necking party.' In different parts of the country, 'petting' and 'necking' have opposite meanings. One locality calls 'necking' (I quote their definition), 'petting only from the neck up.' 'Petting' involves anything else you please. Another section reverses the distinction, and the girl in question was from the latter area. In what manner she announces to her mother her plans to neck, and in what manner her mother accepts the announcement, I cannot be sure.

But I imagine that the assumed childish attitude of the daughter is reflected by her mother, who longs to have her daughter popular, and get her full share of masculine attention. And if the daughter takes for granted that what her mother does not know will not hurt her, so does her mother's habit of blind and deaf supervision indicate that she, too, does not want to know any more than she has to. The college student is no longer preëminently from a selected class. One has only to look at the names and family status in

the college registers to see that. If petting is felt to be poor taste in some families, there are many more families of poor taste than there used to be, whose children go to college. Their daughters are pretty and their sons have money to spend, and they seem prodigies of learning and accomplishment, especially to their unlettered mothers, who glow with pride over their popularity. The pleasant side of the picture is that anybody's daughter may go to college and pass on her own merits. The less agreeable side is that more refined but timid and less numerous stocks feel obliged to model their social behavior on the crude amorousness and doubtful pleasantries which prevail at peasant parties. If any one charges the daughters with being vulgar, the chances are that the mothers, though more shy, are essentially just as vulgar. The mothers have no accomplishments in which the daughters cannot surpass them, or no alternate social grace or cultivated recreation to suggest, if petting is denied them. Indeed, that daughters are really at war with their mothers in point of view, I do not believe. On the contrary, thousands of mothers live all their emotional life in the gayety of their daughters — having nothing else to live it in; and they suffer quite as deeply as their daughters if maternal

strictness threatens to make wallflowers of them. Do not listen to what their mothers *say*, but *watch* them, if you want to know how they feel about their daughters petting! Their protests are about as genuine as the daughter's 'Aren't you terrible?' when a young man starts to pet.

The sex manners of the large majority of uncultivated and uncritical people have become the manners for all, because they have prospered, they are getting educated, and there are so many of them. They are not squeamish, and they never have been. But their children can set a social standard as the parents could not. The prudent lawyer's child has no idea of letting the gay daughter of the broad-joking workman get the 'dates' away from her. If petting is the weapon Miss Workman uses, then petting it must be, and in nine cases out of ten, not only Mrs. Workman, but also Mrs. Lawyer, agree not to see too much. At heart both women are alike. Neither one can bear to see her daughter take a back seat in the struggle for popularity, and neither woman has any other ambition for her daughter but a successful husband. If, by any chance, petting led *away* from popularity and possible husbands instead of *to* them, the mothers would be whole-heartedly against it, and if they were —

petting, as a recognized recreation, would stop.

I have become accustomed, in work with so-called delinquent girls, to find every delinquency easily explained by the family background. And I have never yet known a girl who was an ardent petter whose point of view was not easily traceable to her mother's weakness or her vanity. Sex reserve is not inborn any more than language is. Both must be acquired in early childhood to be used without an effort. The sex restraint or lack of it, which obtains in college, was developing through the grades and high school under a mother's eye, which either saw, or tried not to see. 'She doesn't understand,' is the girl's comment on her mother, and there is a pathos in her defense of her mother's ignorance and weak determination not to know too much. Obviously, however, one will make no progress with a girl by criticizing her mother, and rightly so. The mother is as much a product of her training as is the daughter, and there is no advantage in lowering self-respect when the object is to raise it.

What arguments, then, will have weight with girls whose taste and feeling of restraint have not developed in their homes? Personally I have hit only upon two. One is the injustice of the fact that the girl whose family has climbed to a higher

financial level can 'get away with' behavior for which the less favored working-girl is arrested. Many an incorrigible daughter of poor parents has been brought to the authorities because some neighbor, policeman, relative, or teacher has observed in her the tendency to persistent petting which my college graduate affirmed she indulged in and would always indulge in when she got the chance. Every evening, in the city, 'gas hawks' or roving young men in automobiles pick up the young girls as they come out from work, and 'pet' them even in the streets. They have done it outside my window with an enthusiasm which even two large paper bags filled with water and hurled against their windshield by an interested spectator failed to cool. A college senior told me that she had dragged her dean (who did not believe her reports) around the campus after dark, and counted seventeen couples, swathed in rugs, caressing each other under the campus trees. As college students they are let alone. As little bundle-wrappers, power-machine operators, laundry sorters, and waitresses, they get arrested. As my Amazon said, 'It is natural to do what I like.' Very true. The only difficulty is that Tilly and Rosie, and Tony and Mike, say exactly the same thing. But when they pet in the park,

having no other place to do it, the policeman turns a flashlight on them and orders them off on a charge of unseemly conduct. It is apparently one more thing which a poor girl cannot afford, and I have yet to find a college girl who did not feel this to be unfair. The sense of justice seems invariably very strong. The sense of personal modesty seems invariably rather weak. On the other hand, the ability to think directly to a point, and to admit the conclusion, is rather prevalent, provided the girls can be induced to try it.

It is hardly an accident that my college student who came for vocational advice found the core of her problem to be that of marriage. For the average girl it always is. This girl, like others, had carefully scrutinized both her mother and her strong-minded aunt, brought up on a vague philosophy of a possible Mr. Right waiting for them down the road, and she flatly declined to face so ambiguous an issue. 'If he is there, go and get him. If he is not, go and find him,' was her creed. If having a skilled vocation meant going without marriage, and *vice versa* (which from her observation of her mother and her maiden aunt seemed to be the case), she frankly preferred marriage and said so. So thought her mother

(and perhaps her aunt) without saying so. To her, petting seemed the most direct route to what she wanted, and how could a candid soul think otherwise? This, then, is the second argument which seemed to interest the girls with whom I have spoken. If their training could perhaps hasten rather than retard their marriage, if, instead of waiting until some young man could afford to support them, they could without apologies help to support themselves after their marriage, they thought that they might take their training more seriously. And they agreed that the girl who took her training more seriously had less time to spend on petting. One cannot be working in a laboratory, or making headway in business, or in the arts, and have much free time for getting into the situations where petting is the natural outcome.

For petting depends on late nights and idle days, neither of which the more ambitious can afford. Granted the fact that not all college students are brilliant, and that the average human being is not ambitious, it is still true that when the average girl thinks that her training might mean the possibility of marrying earlier rather than late, it becomes more absorbing. Harnessed to romance, training is worth hard work. Without it,

to the average girl, it is a literal no-man's land, to be gotten over as quickly as possible.

This, therefore, was the verdict of the jury. Petting is natural. We like it. We see no harm in it. No amount of professional training is going to make it less agreeable. But it takes time. It may go too far. It is pleasant to be made love to, but we would be willing to spend less time at it, and more on training for skilled work, if we thought that we should ever use such training when we were married — which we intend to be as soon as possible. If we can see a few married women with attractive homes, husbands and children, who still make any use of their specialized training, we shall believe that it can be done, and that it is worth doing. But we are from Missouri, and must be shown. Our mothers never used any specialized training after marriage, even if they had had it. We never saw a woman in our home town who did, unless she was so poor that she had to.

Our special interest is chemistry (or dress designing, or music, or library work, or electricity, or raising violets, or being a policewoman). If you can show us how we can specialize on this, and keep it up to any advantage after we are married, we will study it more seriously, and have less time to pet. Otherwise not. Or (more fre-

quently) we have no special interest and cannot get one, because all we want is to get married. If we thought any work would help us toward that, we would be interested. Otherwise not. It may be true that, if we seriously cultivate more varied talents than our mothers did, our daughters will not only love us, but admire us, and find us not so easy to surpass. But all that is too far in the future. We must secure our husbands before we can think too much about our daughters. So much for training.

Now for justice. If girls of college standing are going to pet indiscriminately in their homes, their clubs, and their automobiles, then it is surely fair enough to leave unmolested the more lowly petters in the parks, the bathing beaches, the movie theaters, the dance-halls, and in the cars parked along the curb. Let them pet on, untroubled by social reformers or the police. For petting is natural whatever its consequences. We like to do it, and so do they. As Kant would have it: The maxim of our action must become universal law.

To this the jury agreed with hesitation and knitted brows. 'That is only fair,' they nodded slowly — and turned away sorrowful.

XII
GOLDIE GRASSHOPPER

GOLDIE GRASSHOPPER

The intense love of parents for their children is a major instinct among the higher animals as well as among human beings, and operates no less powerfully even though the parents are unconscious of the force which moves them. Some phases of this instinctive manifestation, however, are transitory unless fixed by stabilizing habits, and the devotion of the parent for the young child may fade into indifference or hostility in later years, because of an environment which is inadequate for the development of mutual love.

According to James: Most instincts are implanted for the sake of giving rise to habits. If no habit of acting on them is formed, many instincts ripen at a certain age, then fade away or are weakened or warped in their later appearance.

XII

GOLDIE GRASSHOPPER

GRACIE was the large brunette at one end of the chorus in the Bantam Burlesque, and Goldie was the small girl at the other end, who, by much application of peroxide and lemon juice, had succeeded in becoming a gilt-edged blonde. Gracie was nineteen, had a big resonant voice, and did the sentimental songs, as well as the 'coon-shouting' and 'blues.' Goldie was seventeen, and her voice was nothing but a rasp, squealed off-key through her nose. But she had that mysterious possession known as 'a good line,' did some funny eccentric dances, and the audiences at the Bandbox were not particular about their music provided the girls were lively. As was to be expected, each girl admired her own accomplishments prodigiously, and expressed a voluble scorn and suspicion of her rival in a jealousy which added much thrill and excitement to their lives.

But each had other admirers beside herself. Gracie was often met after the show by a heavy man reported to be of great wealth in the tobacco

business. No one knew much about him. But Goldie was in love with Jake, the solo saxophonist in the orchestra. He was sleek and shiny of hair, with narrow patent-leather pumps, and the blackest of black eyes. He could sob on his saxophone in every trick position invented by jazz clowns, and he and Goldie had invented a few dances in which he would leap to the stage and dance with her, imitating her nasal wails on his instrument as they danced. This was really very funny, for both of them had streaks of the genuine comedian in them, as well as some acrobatic skill, and Jake in his way was a real musician. He relished the humor of Goldie's singing which was so poor that she made a feature of it, and the imitation of it with his throbbing horn was the very spirit of buffoonery.

It was just before Christmas and the Bantam was doing its biggest business, somewhat handicapped by the absence of Gracie, who had vaguely disappeared, and was supposed to have gone off with her stout tobacco merchant. Goldie, therefore, had everything her own way. But in spite of the holiday gayety, she was somewhat out of sorts, had a cold which took the edge off her singing, and a limp which prevented her dancing, and altogether was not making the most of her

opportunity of being for the present so unexpectedly rid of her rival.

On one desperately cold night, with the thermometer dropping lower hour by hour, and the wind like a knife — Goldie crept down the back stairs of the theater the moment her song was over, ran through the alley and into the street leading toward the lake. It was not likely to be frequented at this hour of a freezing night, and she took some odd, halting steps down the icy sidewalk — not an eccentric dance, but more in the nature of a stagger. Stub Kelly, the taxi driver, gliding slowly about on the lookout for a late passenger, watched her with a sigh. These show girls with their theatrical dashes to the lake, from which some repentant escort was supposed to drag them, bored Stub, especially on cold nights. He looked back of him to find the escort. 'She's soused, and so is he, likely. But that kind pay pretty well,' he reflected, so he slowly followed the swaying Goldie, although he could detect no suitor in the offing. 'Wonder where she gets her moonshine. It sure has got a kick,' he mused, as he discreetly rolled along behind her, honking invitingly at intervals. 'That girl's pickled. She'll freeze if her sweetie don't turn up.'

But still no 'sweetie' appeared, and to Stub's

surprise Goldie suddenly struck off from the road and started over the dingy snow toward a tree on the dump. The lake was frozen in great cakes which creaked and rumbled and cracked in the icy wind. One lone tree bent inward from the strong lake blast. Against its trunk Goldie stumbled and leaned, clutching it spasmodically, while Stub watched her and sighed again. If there was one passenger he hated worse than the kind he thought she was before, it was the kind he knew she was now. Like any taxi driver of experience he had them from time to time, and like them all, he dreaded them above all things, and wanted to beat a retreat at once. Goldie would never have been the wiser, for she saw neither him nor anything in the wide universe but her tree. Nor would any one else have known. An anonymous call to the nearest police station would satisfy almost any taxi conscience. It just happened that in such cases Stub was known to be Irish and a 'softy,' and for some reason the Goldies, as he admitted, 'got his goat' — in a world where not many things did.

So he drove to the curb nearest the lake-front dump and honked mildly at first, then with more vigor. It was evident, however, that Goldie did not hear him. He sighed again, and climbed down

from the seat and walked toward her. 'Want some help, girlie?' he said gently. The words might have been those of a professional 'gas-hawk,' but they were not uttered in tones of blandishment, nor was there a trace of coquetry in the stare which Goldie turned toward him. Her hat was pushed over her face, on which the paint stood out in purple patches against her livid cheeks. The wind howled and blew the snow in gusts off the blocks of lake ice, through which an arc light threw its blue glare on Goldie's distorted mouth. It was drawn back from her teeth, and twisted into a grimace of agony, as she slipped down her tree toward the ice beneath it. 'How about a ride home, kiddo? Need your mother, don't you?' shouted Stub against the wind. Then he muttered, 'Oh, hell,' picked her up, laid her in the car, and headed for the hospital with his foot on the gas.

'Found her by the lake,' he explained to the night nurse, who gave her patient one look, and told the orderly to 'make it snappy.' 'She won't tell her name, but she looks like the kid who dances at the Bantam.'

'That Bantam!' snorted the nurse, and shrugged her shoulders. She had met some members of its chorus before.

The next morning found Goldie lying in a ward, very dazed and very sullen. Her daze and sullenness were so complete that they amounted almost to a stupor. She looked neither to the right nor to the left. She would not speak to the nurse, nor answer when they spoke to her. She was filled with resentment so utter and absorbing that her face was aged and hardened by it. The Goldie of yesterday would not have wanted to look so old and pinched, but the Goldie of to-day did not care. She wondered that she lived at all, she was so enraged with life. The head nurse came in and looked her over, pushed her slightly to one side of the bed, and laid a small bundle beside her. 'Your son wants you,' she remarked briefly, and left the two together. A spasm of rage rose up in Goldie's breast and almost stifled her. She wondered that they dared leave a child beside her, when they ought to know that she would murder it. But she did not move a muscle. She lay in the same stupor of resentment, while other nurses with other bundles hurried to and fro down the ward. There seemed to be a general commotion as of a frog pond on a spring evening, when all the little frogs start chirping at once. From forty little throats came forty variations of the same refrain in which some shrill soprano croakings stood out against

the lustier background of stout young baritones and basses.

Suddenly the unquenchable comedian in Goldie began to titter. 'I bet Jake could do that on the old horn,' she thought, and suddenly there was a little squirm at her side, and a squeak as ineffectual as her own singing voice joined feebly in the froggish chorus. She was so startled at this sound that she forgot her rage for one instant, and involuntarily glanced into the bundle. There, swathed in blankets, and with a towel slipping over his forehead — there was Jake blinking up at her with his shiny black eyes, playing a trick saxophone in his throat. Goldie was completely taken back at this apparition. She lay gazing at it in silence, then she twitched the towel still farther over one black eye, 'Jake on a jag — for the Lord's sake!' she whispered, staring. But she shut her eyes as she saw a nurse approaching. Goldie still lay as in a stupor, but with new and even more overwhelming sensations added to her daze. What preposterous little creature had the effrontery to lie squawking at her side? She had hitherto ignored the very possibility of his existence. She had turned from the sometimes insistent warning of his advent, with a skill bred of years of ignoring all obligations which she did

not mean to meet. She had run away from rent collections and food bills. She had escaped the installment agent by way of the back door, and the police, more than once, by the fire escape. It must be possible somehow to dodge a helpless little nobody who so dumbly but so persistently accompanied her like her shadow. But here he was — gazing at her with the fixed ill-focussed stare of the newly born. 'No one ever outlamped me yet,' she reflected, and glared back at him as soon as the nurse was out of sight. The little black eyes did not waver. Then there was a prodigious yawn and his eyes shut. 'Wore him out,' thought Goldie, turning away, much pleased with herself — but glanced back to find his shut eyes had been but a ruse. He was staring at her more fixedly than ever. 'Rubbers worse than me,' she mused. 'I wish Jake could see the darned little mutt.'

Then it suddenly came over her what it would be like to have a big Jake show the slightest interest and pride in a little Jake. The thought brought back her rage, resentment, and self-pity, and she threw herself over on her side to gaze upon the face of Gracie, catching sight of her aghast from the adjacent bed. The encounter was too sudden for either girl to have a chance to hide from the

other. For once, the self-possession of both completely deserted them. With jaws dropping, the two girls stared at each other, and when the words of abuse with which both were so familiar rose automatically to their lips, they died unuttered. 'Lying side by each in the maternity ward sure cramps your style when it comes to mud-slinging,' as Goldie afterward truly remarked.

'How long you been here?' Goldie finally managed to ask.

'Ten days — leaving to-morrow,' answered Gracie.

'Thought you'd run off and got married,' said Goldie.

'Going to the justice next week.'

'To the justice?' burst out Goldie jealously, rising on her elbow. 'How'd you work that? A shotgun or the kid?'

'The kid's dead,' said Gracie.

'Oh, dead, is it?' said Goldie, sinking back, as if that answered all questions. 'No such luck here. Look at what I drew,' and she held up little Jakie, whose blackberry eyes still peered from his blankets, and who was sucking mildly at an imaginary milk supply. 'Ever see anything worse than that to have wished on you?' she inquired sardonically.

'Yes, I have,' answered Gracie — 'I've seen one dead' — and she suddenly turned her face to the wall.

For Goldie to marry Jake presented no marked advantages beyond the rather mythical one of providing little Jake with a name. As yet his father knew nothing of his existence, and Goldie was in no hurry to inform him. Jakie could wait for his last name. Even his first one was only his by a kind of natural right. His ludicrous resemblance to his sleek, beady-eyed father, both in his face and in his saxophonic utterance, made Goldie call him Jakie only because he *was* Jakie, and she could call him nothing else. What Jakie needed more than a surname was someone who could guarantee him an adequate milk diet. The little fellow had not taken kindly to any brands as yet provided, which ranged from patent foods in a bottle to condensed from a can, but which were all alike in disagreeing with him, and in costing more money than Goldie could spare.

In the matter of paying milk bills, Jake was no better off than she, for whereas he earned more, he already had a mother and a grandmother to support. His father, somewhat gifted and wholly unreliable, had drifted off the scene years before, leaving his own mother for his weak and sickly

wife to feed. When Jake showed an inheritance of his father's musical gift, and could play not only every tune, but almost every noise he heard, on his saxophone, his mother gave up her feeble efforts to earn their food and rent by working in a laundry, and expected nineteen-year-old Jake to give her the living which his father had failed to provide. Although something of an invalid, she was only forty, so was likely to live on forever, and effectually to prevent Jake from ever being able to support a family of his own. The old grandmother, of whom Jake was rather fond, and of whose eyes he was the very apple, was crippled with rheumatism, and could never work again, although she too came of long-lived stock, and had an excellent appetite. Goldie had been at their rooms to practice some dance steps with Jake. She liked the old lady who had praised the way in which Goldie imitated some of her girlish dance steps from her description.

Goldie would have sacrificed her feelings, to be sure, if it would have done her any good. But since no more money could be extracted from Jake than he had — the amount of which she knew to a penny — and his two parents were more dependent on him than she, she was in no hurry to marry for the sake of a living she could

not get, and, on the contrary, run the risk of having to support his dependents in case Jake took it into his head to follow his father's example and run away. She was fond of Jake and always had been. But marriage was an economic proposition not to be entered into too lightly with a baby to support.

So Goldie went to a rooming-house, left the baby with the landlady, and got a job. Her first venture was in a store selling gloves. But Jakie was so fretful, and it took so much time to feed him, that the landlady said she could not bother with him at any price his mother could pay. Several store and factory jobs and endless rooming-houses ended in the same dilemma. Evidently Goldie must stay at home with her son and feed him, and the only place where a girl with a baby to feed can be employed is in a house. For Goldie the show girl even to contemplate work in any one's kitchen shows how she had been shaken from her customary habits. Kitchen drudgery filled her with the contempt and loathing usual in her class. But in spite of the fact that she tried to give satisfaction, and the housekeepers who employed her tried to be satisfied, the experiment was never a success. Goldie's standards of housekeeping were those of the shabbiest room-

ing-houses and the dressing-rooms of cheap theaters. Disorder and dirty dishes, tattered finery, and eating and sleeping at odd hours, constituted the atmosphere in which she had always felt at home. She had always fed more upon jokes, dance steps, joy-rides, and applause from dingy burlesque audiences, than she had upon calories or vitamins. To be thrust suddenly into a modern housekeeper's kitchen, with nooks and crevices to be mopped, refrigerators to be kept full of ice, kettles scrubbed on the outside, and meals produced on time, was as much beyond her ken as if she were an alley kitten. The latter demand especially amazed her. Hitherto she had dropped into a delicatessen when she was hungry, or had got some one to feed her after the show, when she was broke. The incomprehensible women for whom she worked, with their eyes on the clock, flew at a meal according to its dictates, and demanded that it be on the table as punctually as a showman rings up the curtain. Usually when it was prepared, not without heat and worry, the family had to be drummed up from the piazza, the garage, or the bathtub to eat it.

'Why not wait till the gang's hungry?' Goldie would inquire. 'Skip a meal now and then and they'd hop into line.' But this practical sugges-

tion never met with a favorable response. 'These fat women have to look at the clock to see if it's time to get hungry and eat a meal. But I suppose they're hungry all the time — that's why they're fat,' she reflected philosophically.

Most of her employers, to their credit be it said, were genuinely sorry for her, and tried to help her for the sake of the baby, who, of course, was a great inconvenience. But Goldie's complete lack of any housewifely instincts usually wore out their patience, and she was unable to pretend to an interest in their monotonous schedules and solemn rites. To pour hot rinsing water on the dishes, for instance, when Heaven knew they had already been washed clean beyond all reason, was a continual irritation. In vain did housekeepers tell her that unrinsed dishes were a menace. Goldie had eaten off too many of them and had survived.

The simple fact was that Goldie was a grasshopper, born of grasshoppers, and bred to no other purpose but the hopping and skipping of grasshoppers in a third-rate show. In the insect world, such birth and breeding gives one the right to fulfill the vocation for which one was born and bred. But in the human world, only those with a bank account are entitled to carry

out such antics. A poor young female of the human species, no matter what her inheritance or training, must be an ant or a busy bee. The leapings of the grasshopper world are only for those who can afford them, and Goldie emphatically could not.

One evening, after a day in which she had melted the coffee pot, left food to spoil in an iceless ice-box, and nearly set them all on fire with an electric iron which she had forgotten to detach — Goldie strolled disconsolately up and down the walk, pushing little Jakie in his go-cart.

Suddenly she heard, in a well-known voice, 'For the Lord's sake — Goldie! Where the hell you been?' — and Jake strolled up behind her. His saxophone was under his arm. He was on his way, it appeared, to play in a jazz orchestra for a college dance. 'Taken to baby-farming?' he asked, staring in amazement. Then — 'You ain't married, are you, Goldie?' he added slowly.

Goldie stared back at him in silence. She had seen him but once since the night she disappeared from the show, and that was one evening when she had stolen back into the audience, and watched the kicking of the chorus and Jake's trick playing, in a bitter incognito. She had sent him no word, asked nothing from him, and had

never made up her mind whether or not she ever would. But here he was, through no contrivance of hers. On a sudden impulse she pushed back the top of the baby coach and turned little Jakie so that his father could get a look at him directly in the eyes.

'Yours?' he whispered under his breath.

'Yours!' she answered.

He started back as if struck in the face, and the color raced into his cheeks, suffused his forehead, tinged his ears, and ran down his neck. The sleek and slender Jake for once was as completely off his guard as Goldie and Gracie had been when first they gazed at each other in the hospital. The same elemental force had him in its grip. He started to take his breath for a burst of denial of his paternity, for vituperation against Goldie's character, and sneers against the little creature whose black eyes blinked at him from a fuzzy drooping head. But his words, too, stuck in his throat. How vituperate against a girl, thin, unrouged, and shabby, who had asked nothing from him? How argue with a visible miniature of himself, sleepily blowing bubbles in his face? Indeed, how associate guilt or intrigue with anything so inconceivably innocent? Speechless they looked upon little Jakie, silenced by an emergency

which no grasshopper jumpings, nor saxophone chromatics had trained them to meet.

'Is it sick — or something?' Jake finally ventured.

Goldie's eyes filled. 'Yes, he is. He can't keep what he eats. Something's wrong with him.'

'Can't you leave it at a hospital — in a basket? — *you* know,' he asked, as his feeble contribution to Jakie's well-being.

'I've tried it, but I can't. He lays his little head on my shoulder, as if he was trying not to make trouble, and I can't leave him no more than I can jump in the lake. I've tried that, too.'

Jake reached in his pocket and shoved some small change into her hand — 'I'll be round again,' he called back as he turned abruptly and ran down the street.

Goldie got a place in another less exacting kitchen, and Jake called fairly often when his business permitted. He never asked for the baby, but his black eyes roved about to find him as soon as he entered the kitchen, and Goldie, thinner, and more forlorn, would bring him in, and sit with his tiny black thatch drooping even more weakly against her shoulder.

'He don't even cry much any more. It looks like he was saying — "I thought I was wanted, so

I come. Why wouldn't I? Then I found I wasn't wanted, so I started to go. Now you change your mind and want me to stay. But it's too late. I can't make the grade." His little head just lays there' — and Goldie would sob in exhaustion.

Jake would sometimes protest roughly 'Cut it out about that kid's head,' and leave in what looked like irritation. It was true that Goldie was not very cheerful company, and made none of her old-time effort to amuse him. But in a few days Jake would be back again, and his roving eyes would search for the baby as before.

Finally his orchestra had to leave town for a fortnight to play in a carnival. When he returned to Goldie's kitchen, she was not there.

The mistress answered him somewhat suspiciously, 'You her brother? Well, you're too late. She's gone, and the baby's dead.'

'Dead?' echoed Jake blankly.

'Sure, it's dead. Never could keep a thing on its stomach. I did all I could, but it had a bad start. I wonder it lived as long as it did. It laid its little head —' but Jake had turned and was running down the street.

A few weeks later, Goldie was back in the burlesque chorus. Gracie had married money was the rumor, and had left for New York. Goldie

had been visiting her relatives, she explained — 'And they sure did treat you rough, girlie,' commented the other girls. 'You must have hit the pace pretty hard, by your looks. Good thing you came back for a rest cure.'

It would be pleasant to report that all this had turned Goldie into a hard-working little ant, and that she and Jake, happily married, now take the little ants to picnics by the lake in a partly paid-for Ford — like millions of others who only differ from them in that they had a slightly better start. But so far, such is not the case. Goldie is still a grasshopper, and hops better than she will ever cook, sew, or mop. Jake looks like a cricket, still sleek and shiny. But his mother and grandmother are good for thirty years' more consumption of his earnings, so he is doomed to be an ant in an anthill not his own. The net result of Jakie's coming and departure is that Goldie drops her spare nickels into the box in the drug-store (with a baby's picture on it) that collects small cash for some dubious charity. She has watched one baby die of slow starvation and these nickels help to drug the memory. And Jake buys his newspaper of a little black-eyed newsboy whom he addresses as 'Son.' 'The kid looks like I did,' he explains. That's about all. Goldie still has a

pretty good line, and amuses her rather grimy audience, although the management sometimes finds fault. 'You sang something terrible last night, Goldie. "YOUR HEAD LAY ON MY SHOULDER, BUT ITS WEIGHT LIES ON MY HEART," is a swell song — no comedy. It's the real stuff, but you murdered it. You made Jake's wind break on his sax, and he never done that before. He covered it up pretty well, but you didn't. You got worse and worse.'

Goldie hopes to try the New York variety shows next, and Jake secretly plans to pipe his lay in new fields and leave his relatives to the Charities. What are they for if not for that? — Which all goes to show that if one wants citizens who ply the industry of the ant in the steadfast rays of righteousness, a poor way to get them is to train up little grasshoppers, who know no fervors but the volcanoes of their own instincts, into whose dead craters they fall, dry and shriveled husks, before they are twenty-one.

XIII
SILK STOCKINGS

SILK STOCKINGS

Egotism is the instinct which prompts us to consider our own persons as supremely important, and to suffer if we are not held in high esteem by our associates. It is at the basis of all legitimate ambition and self-respect, as well as being the root of selfishness; the form of its expression depending upon its early training and control.

The sense of inferiority which results when egotism has no legitimate satisfaction is exceptionally strong in youth, and when complicated by foreign background and scanty purse often leads to anti-social behavior. The egotism of the untrained girl is apt to express itself in noticeable dress, for dress is to her a symbol of social prestige, sex attainment, and personal worth.

XIII

SILK STOCKINGS

SIXTEEN is a romantic age, and Anna was sixteen. She was also a candy-packer, and received for this labor twelve dollars a week. Of this sum she paid seven dollars to her father for room and board, and the joint care of her little brother who was still in school, seventy-two cents for car-fares to work, a dollar and a half to take herself and her little brother to the movies Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday nights, and twenty-five cents for stamps and note-paper. This left exactly two dollars and fifty-three cents each week to spend for shoes, aprons, rouge, underwear, dentist, movie magazines, extra car-fare, gum, talcum powder, overshoes, hair nets, dresses, insurance for her funeral, insurance for her little brother's funeral, hair-curlers, a winter coat, a summer hat . . . and silk stockings.

To purchase all these necessities on two dollars and fifty-three cents a week requires some financial engineering. The reason for the board money was that her father had been out of work and was in debt. The reason for the movies was, that of

course one had to go. The reason for the stamps and note-paper was that Anna had a correspondent to whom she wrote daily. She had never seen him, but she had found his address in the paper, and Anna was romantic.

Her letters written every evening and around which her imagination circled all day, were on this order:

Dear Bud,

Say, Kid, I sure am lonesome. Do you like sweet sixteen? That's me. I saw the swell film last night, The Woman Pays. That's God's truth. She sure does. Ain't it the truth? Think of me when you read this. I sure think of you. How many girls you got or am I the only one? I sure am true. Are you? Here's time to close. You know what crosses mean, don't say you don't. You ain't no canary, but I am a chicken. Haha joke. your Anna.

Every evening Anna penned variations of this theme and while they may not have conveyed much valuable information, at least they were letters, they relieved her feelings, and they took as much note-paper and postage as if she had said something.

In the course of this interchange of mutual regard, the unseen one had written that he had got married, but that a friend was willing to assume the burden of answering her letters. This shift

was perfectly satisfactory to Anna, and the correspondence continued to flourish without a jolt in the machinery or a change of literary style.

Any story of Anna's career would be incomplete which left out a determining factor of her life, which was that, although only sixteen, she weighed one hundred and eighty-five pounds. She sprang from a stock built for long hours of labor in a Russian wheat-field, and long hours on a stool in an American candy factory had made her proportions unduly generous for her age. Hence the fact that an interchange of letters with an unseen admirer flourished more vigorously than dance dates with the boys whom she saw and admired, but who asked other girls to go with them.

And hence the peculiarly critical problem of her silk stockings.

As every woman knows, the bargains in silk stockings, the sales where leftovers, and artificial silks, and factory seconds, are disposed of for eighty-five cents, cannot be patronized by outsized legs. Let slender little girls of attenuated stock wear them if they will. Stout Anna, fresh from the farm with heavy bones and muscles strong as iron, could not average more than two weeks to a pair of good quality. As for an inferior

make, she could scarcely wear them a day without that dismal cracking sound followed by a 'run,' which put them as much out of commission as a silk hat run over by a truck. For Anna nothing short of a two-dollar pair was worth the buying. So obviously, an average bi-weekly investment of two dollars for hosiery meant that all the other necessities of life must be bought for one dollar and fifty-three cents. Such was Anna's budget.

Now comes the obvious comment. Since silk stockings are so expensive and so perishable — why buy them? What right had Anna to a luxury which she could not afford? And therein lies the whole story. The simple fact was, that to Anna and to all her friends, silk stockings were far more to be desired than heaven or food.

Many were the devices by which other articles of dress were imitated or their absence concealed. Hats, blouses, sweaters, and capes could be borrowed, dyed, made over, and camouflaged in a hundred ways. As for all undergarments that did not show, they were cheerfully dispensed with.

But stockings! One cannot make them, borrow them, nor go without. Disagree as the girls in the factory often did in their arguments about religion, the relative merits of carnation versus violet perfume, the duty of giving one's pay to

one's parents, and the desirability of early marriage — on one point they were all agreed. American ladies must wear stockings, and those stockings must be of silk. The mothers of the girls denied this; but the daughters gave to their mothers' opinions the same kindly but condescending shrug which we all bestow upon the quaint notions of the foreign-born.

They had used their eyes on the street, in the movies, in the shops, and even in the churches and the schools, and it had been amply demonstrated to them that American ladies never ventured forth in the kind of stockings which foreign mothers thought their daughters should afford.

'My mother, she says she don't see no sense to wearing silk ones,' said Rosie Procincio. 'She says they're extravagant. But she don't see no sense to wearing any at all, half the time. She just don't understand.' And the other girls wagged their heads wisely.

In America one must do as the Americans do, a fact which their parents could not grasp. Rosie got her silk stockings by withholding from her mother the news that she had got a raise, and pocketing the surplus. Letty worked Saturday afternoons and saved the overtime for stockings.

Suzanne took the money allowed her for her lunch. Whereas stolid Mame could think of no more subtle method than to take what she wanted from her pay envelope when necessary, and to endure the subsequent parental punishment with a philosophy developed through years of family squabbles.

Anna, after an argument with a thrifty family friend, and an unusually penniless week, had once gone selfconsciously to work in cotton hose. She was met with — 'Who put bandages on the grand piano, Anna?' — 'Are you sixty? I thought you wuz sixteen.' — 'That's right, girlie, save your money. I wisht I could.'— 'Did you dance your feet out of the other pair, or are you saving 'em in your hope chest?' — 'Better wear 'em before you're married for you'll never get 'em afterwards.' — 'Why not paint some on, and save *all* your money?' — And so on and so on. Poor Anna tried to make a few bright sallies in return, but she was not very quick of speech, and, after all, what could she say? The other girls had stated the exact truth.

She *had* laid aside her one extra pair against the time when she might meet her unseen friend at the station, and walk proudly with him to the priest. But this evening after work she could hardly get

home fast enough to pull them out of the old orange-crate which figured as her hope chest. They represented some weeks of saving, for they were chiffon hose of the four-dollar variety. She sighed a little that they must be wasted on the factory instead of being saved for Frank. But she had no choice. She knew that she could never bear another day of such humiliation as that which she had just passed through. The next morning a chorus of 'Gee, look at the swell socks! Who's your friend? I'll bet they set back the poor gink for five berries.' — 'Don't put your wad in that bank, Anna. The spider-web national ain't safe.' — 'Say, girlie, give me the loan of 'em to-night. They just match my new kicks' — and similar cheerful comments, salved all wounds, and Anna's self-respect was restored.

But the greatest event in Anna's life hitherto, was yet to come. One evening about a week after this episode, she found a letter waiting for her on her return from the factory. It ran:

Dear anna, how is it can you come? I got house and fonograf most paid for. good job to. if you like be my wife come 10.30 train to sladeville if you dont want it, send back ticket. law will get you if you take ticket and don't come, but you come and have nice home near pictures. hope you can work good. I love you.

Frank

Now a proposal is an interesting event to any woman at any time, no matter what her age or her occupation. But a proposal to sixteen-year-old Anna, after a year in a candy factory with no local beaux, a trip to an unknown city full of pictures, and a lover's proof of sincerity in the shape of a railroad ticket was enough to take her breath away. It meant leaving her father and brother without a housekeeper; but Anna could not even face the possibility of not using her ticket at once. She avoided argument when possible, so she decided to take no risk of refusal from her father, but to run away. A hurried postcard ornamented with a highly colored pair of lovers sent word to Frank when he might expect his bride.

The next morning she got her father's breakfast, hurried her brother off to school, and opened her purse. There would be no pay from the factory for another week, but she could not wait for that. With her last twelve dollars she had already paid her board and loaned three dollars to her father. That left two dollars. She had also paid fifty cents for a movie and fifty cents for fares, which left her with three quarters and two dimes after the postcard had been mailed. She laid the coins and the ticket on the table, and turned to pack

the contents of the orange-crate in a newspaper. Then she bent down incautiously, to put on her best slippers. Crack — the threads of the overworked chiffon hose gave way, and two runs tore like lightning from each ruptured knee and disappeared into the toe of each slipper. In an instant both stockings were the most hopeless wrecks that ever faced an exasperated bride. This was too much. The train went within an hour. She had got to be in it, and she had got to greet her lover in silk stockings. There was but one way. She gave a hasty twist to the remnants which she wore, tied up her bundle, and hurried to the store on the corner where she did so much of her 'window shopping.' While the woman in charge was waiting on another customer, Anna slipped a pair of stockings from the counter under her bundle and walked out of the store. Once around the corner she ran for the train as fast as she could go. At the station a wait of a few minutes ended her suspense, and she was seated hot and breathless in the train for a three-hour run to Sladeville.

The excitement of her journey completely eclipsed any pricks of conscience for her theft. She could think of nothing but the joy ahead, and (after the change had been made in the women's

compartment) of how nice her feet looked, even if the slippers were so tight that they hurt. Sladeville boasted but a small station, much less imposing than the one she had left, but it had the advantage that in its small waiting-room there would be no chance of missing Frank. Although she had no idea how he looked, her dreams had pictured him in the likeness of Rudolph Valentino, and her wish was father to her thoughts.

But no Rudolph remained after the other passengers had left the station; no one but a small swarthy elderly man who was nervously wiping a bald brow with a blue bandana handkerchief. Anna stood ready to cry with disappointment, and the elderly man looked equally distressed.

Finally he stepped up to Anna, 'Did you see a nice little girl on that train, named Anna — Anna Kopsky?' he asked, furtively making sure of the name from a postcard in his hand.

Anna stared at him and at the card, with amazement.

'That's my name,' she said; and then an idea striking her, 'Did Frank Severino ask you to come for me?' she inquired eagerly.

The little man stared. 'I am Frank Severino,' he gasped huskily.

Never did dreams meet facts with a ruder clash.

Anna's mind was so full of her Rudolph image that she could hardly believe her eyes. As for poor Frank, the lonely widower, his idle fancy of a girl slender and dark, such as he used to dance with when he was a boy in Italy, was so overwhelmed by the actuality of the powerful Anna, that he instinctively edged away from her and glanced toward the door.

But his wits speedily came back, for after all he was experienced in the ways of women, having had two wives, and several daughters of Anna's age. He recovered his voice first.

'Maybe you no like this town,' he insinuated, sidling toward the ticket office. 'Maybe you want to go home.'

Anna was crying, but she nodded her head, and accepted the ticket which Frank soon shoved into her hand.

'That right. You go home like nice girl,' said Frank. 'You marry nice big fella.' And seeing that Anna was sobbing blindly into her handkerchief, he improved the opportunity to make a quick but quiet getaway

'Ten bones,' he muttered, when he got safely out of sight. 'Ten bones; but thas all right. No good. Too big. Ten bones vera cheep get rid that girl.'

There was nothing for Anna to do but to take the next train back, and from then on events moved rapidly. Her agitated father had informed the police of her flight, the shopkeeper had done the same. The stockings, which were now on Anna's stout legs, and whose origin she had completely forgotten, were easily identified, and, before she had wholly recovered her wits, she found herself seated in an office trying to remember how it all started.

'I don't know why I took 'em, lady,' she moaned miserably. Of course she had taken them because she *had* to have them, and could get them in no other way. But that explanation was too obvious to make, so she made none.

'But, Anna, you cannot afford silk stockings. Why don't you wear cotton ones?' inquired the lady at the desk.

'They all laugh,' sniffed Anna. 'Once I did, and one fella, he sez, "I met a good girl," and another fella, he says, "How did ya know she wuz so good?" and the other fella, that's the first fella, he sez, "Because she wears cotton stockings." And everybody laughed. The girls laughed too, and that put shame on me.'

'Wearing cotton stockings is nothing to be ashamed of,' moralized the lady. 'Your mother

got along without silk ones because she couldn't afford them. And you can't afford them, and probably your husband won't be able to,' she added severely.

Anna's eyes filled with tears. 'I won't never *get* a husband if I don't wear 'em,' she groaned. 'My mother didn't wear silk stockings because she was a foreigner. But I'm an American,' she declared stoutly, 'and Americans wear silk stockings.'

As she said this, she gazed into the outer office where three stenographers, one switchboard girl, one policewoman, one probation officer, and two girls looking for jobs were seated, and where one office supervisor and one typewriter agent were standing by the table in conversation. Five pairs of ankles were encased in faultless white silk, two in black, one in gray, one in light tan, and the agent's trousers were pulled up to display a fancy weave of heavy silk check. The only cotton legs in sight were attached to an elderly German woman, who, with muttered grunts, was washing the windows.

'All Americans don't wear them — at least it isn't necessary that they should, anyhow,' added the mentor rather weakly. As she said it she curled her own ankles out of sight on the rung of her chair.

'Well, Anna,' she continued desperately after a pause, during which her gaze wandered to Anna's smooth stolen hose, already straining every thread and tapering so heroically into her tight slippers. 'You've got to earn more money, that's plain. You've lost your old position, but since this is your first offense the store won't prosecute, although, of course, you have got to pay for the stockings. We'll see if we can't get you a better job' — and she turned to the telephone.

'Maybe we could place her,' said a pleasant voice at the other end of the wire. 'But I can't see her to-day. Too busy. We're having special counter displays, and selling talks, to attract customers. Drop in and see our new line of fancy summer hosiery. It's going big. There may be a place for your girl at the silk hose counter, especially if she is attractive and quick.'

The lady at the desk made no answer to this, but hung up the receiver with a sigh. The interview suddenly embarrassed her and she rose, telling Anna to come in to-morrow. 'Maybe we can get you a nice housework job, where you can save more money and won't need to spend so much on clothes,' she said brightly. 'But whereever you go, you know you mustn't ever steal silk

stockings again or steal anything else. You understand that, don't you?' she asked, with a gaze slightly averted from Anna's pitiful finery, already wearing out before it was paid for.

Anna turned toward the outer room in which her heavy eyes could see nothing but the sheen of twenty smooth, shiny ankles, twenty mystic marks of one hundred per cent Americanism, twenty symbols, indispensable yet unobtainable, of a happy citizenship toward which her whole soul yearned, but from which she felt herself forever debarred. Their sleek, glistening surfaces shone and twinkled on their lucky wearers, but only in the fuzzy old German window-washer could she see her own future, and the vision quenched the very fires of life within her. Her destiny — a 'foreign' houseworker in cotton stockings, like that old woman.

'Yes, lady, I understand,' she assented dully.

XIV
THE FIRST OF MAY

THE FIRST OF MAY

The instinctive desire to be with the crowd, which is often called the herd instinct, is very strong, especially in young people. Human beings are essentially gregarious, and the baffling of their social instinct results in loneliness, which is one of the most acutely poignant and distressing emotions suffered by human beings, and often becomes insupportable. Under the spur of loneliness and to rid themselves of it, most people will be driven to behavior of which they would be incapable if they had other adequate outlets for their social instincts.

XIV

THE FIRST OF MAY

The door of a room on the top floor of Mrs. Sparks's rooming-house suddenly opened, and four girls, laughing and chattering, dragged themselves in. They automatically glanced at themselves in the glass, powdered their noses, and threw themselves on the beds. At least three of them did. The fourth had no hat, so was relieved of the necessity of taking it off, and had no powder, so felt no responsibility toward her nose. Her dress was a faded gingham of countrified cut, which she experienced no pleasure in looking at, and she felt a little shy about throwing herself on the bed in a room to which she had only been invited by one of the girls who had taken pity on her. So Nelly sat down by the window, and leaning on the sill looked out dreamily at the wide lemon-colored sky, streaked with blue and crimson, in which the sun was preparing to make a glorious exit.

It was the first of May, but a warm wave had struck the city which was sweltering in mid-summer heat. All the girls had been on their feet

all day in the five-and-ten-cent store, and they were hot and tired.

'Gee, it's warm, ain't it?' remarked Emma, with her hands under her head and her feet kicking idly. 'The store was awful hot. I'm all in.'

'So am I,' echoed Marie from the other bed.

'It's spring fever,' remarked Agnes, strolling over to the window and regarding herself critically in the mirror of her compact box. 'It's awful catching on an evening like this. It'll be grand out to-night — What's the matter, Nelly?' she asked the little girl beside her who was staring out at the yellow sky.

'I bet she's homesick. I bet she's longing for the buttercups and daisies,' drawled Emma from the bed.

'Aw, shut up!' said Agnes, frowning at her. 'Don't tease the kid. Why wouldn't she be lonesome? — What's wrong with you?' she asked again, patting Nelly's shoulder.

'Nothing,' answered Nelly with a start, 'only my feet hurt.' And she kicked off her slippers, showing her shabby stockings with a hole in each heel.

'Gee, so do mine,' said Marie, and she kicked off her shoes, which were followed by Emma's tossed from her toes in a high curve and barely

missing the window. There was not a whole pair of stockings among the four. 'I'll show you what hurts worse than my feet,' announced Emma suddenly, and she pulled herself up to exhibit some bruises on her shoulder. 'Bud done that!' she went on meditatively. 'Bud's my husband, and he beat me up something awful. That's why I left him, and it's for good this time. No more married life for me.'

There was a brief silence after this announcement, then Marie ventured — 'He must be an awful fella. A good job you left him.'

Agnes sniffed slightly, but Emma wagged her head, 'He ought to be behind the bars, that guy.'

Hardly were the words out of her mouth when a hand-organ broke loudly through the hum of street noises coming up from below. It was playing 'Silver Threads Among the Gold,' badly off-key, but the spirit of spring was in it, and the effect was instantaneous. The two girls who had been lying in a limp languor on the bed leaped to their feet, and Emma seized Marie around the waist — 'I'll show you the new dip, kiddo,' she cried, foxtrotting with her around the room, and smothering Marie's imploring demand to go easy on her only pair of stockings. As they danced, a peanut came sailing through the window where

Nelly sat, and fell on the floor between the dancers.

'Look and see who's the fresh gent!' shouted Emma.

'I don't wantta,' said Nelly, drawing shyly back, as a second peanut hit her head and fell at their feet.

'For Pete sake!' cried Emma, 'I'll show them who's in the monkey house, I'm not shy.' And still dancing, she picked up her slipper and hurled it out of the window, where its descent was greeted by cheers.

As the third peanut appeared, however, she pushed Marie from her and ran to the window, leaning out over the sill.

'Oh,' she called, letting out her breath slowly, as she saw who was below. 'Oh, you don't say! Well, I should say *not*. You've sure got your nerve,' and she drew in her head. 'It's Bud,' she announced dramatically. 'He wants me to go to Luna to a prize dance. He's got another guy with him. Wantta go, Marie?'

'I thought you was off Bud. I thought you had filed your papers,' remarked Agnes.

'Well, I have,' answered Emma, hastily prinking. 'But it's a swell night, and there's nothing to do if I stay here.'

'I don't suppose we'd oughtta go,' remarked Marie doubtfully, also applying her rouge and lipstick.

'How bad do you want us?' giggled Emma out of the window. 'You gotta throw my kick up. I ain't no barefoot dancer,' and she fell back laughing loudly, as her slipper flew up and past her onto the floor.

'Sorry to leave you behind, Nelly,' apologized Emma, 'but I'd go crazy if I didn't go somewheres. Agnes has a sweetie, so *she* should worry,' and she dragged Marie after her out of the room, dancing as she went.

The two remaining girls rushed to the window and waved them off. Then each sank back against her own window-sill, and drank in the beauty of the evening. Children were playing ball in the street below. Girls with their sweethearts were beginning to saunter dreamily by. The hand-organ with its discordant gayety was reaping its harvest of pennies in the monkey's cap. Men in their shirt-sleeves and women in fresh aprons lounged silent on their doorsteps, or exchanged good-natured trivialities with their neighbors. And over all brooded the warm yellow sky with its saffron streamers, its radiance reflected from each western window, and for one enchanted hour

drenching the dingy street with poetry and romance.

'She's a crazy kid, that Emma,' remarked Agnes idly. 'She's filed papers three times on that fella — but she always goes back. Nothing else to do on an evening like this, I guess. Don't know as I blame her. Say, kid, want anything to eat, there's some corn over there if you can find the can-opener. It must be around somewhere.'

'I ain't hungry,' answered Nelly, leaning her head back.

'Me neither,' agreed Agnes, 'but I thought a pickle would taste good,' and she reached around for a paper bag off the bed, and passed it to Nelly. 'It's dill,' she urged.

'Tastes like spring, don't it?' said Nelly, and each girl nibbling at a large pickle continued to gaze, one at the scene below, the other at the sky.

Suddenly Agnes leaned out — waved a greeting, and whispered to Nelly — 'Quick! See that guy over there?'

Nelly gazed about vaguely — 'No, I don't see who you mean.'

'Too late,' answered Agnes, leaning back. 'You looked the wrong way. He went around the corner. That was Slim Mackie. I heard he got the Pen. I sure was surprised to see Slim.'

'What's the matter with him? What did he do?' inquired Nelly, without much interest.

A distant clock struck seven and Agnes rose and began to arrange her hair and dress. 'Oh, I don't know, I heard he peddled dope. I used to like that guy, but he got too rough for me. One time a gang of us was out in his car, or we *thought* it was, but it turned out he'd stole it, and the cops chased us, and he parked in an alley and we run into a Chink laundry. And Slim he hid under the wash. And when the cop came in, the old Chink could only say, "Me no sabe. Me no sabe." They said he and Slim had some dope deal on, and that's why he hid him. They said it wasn't the first time Slim had had to hide. It's too bad. I kindda liked Slim.'

'How could you like a fella like that?' asked Nelly curiously.

'Oh, he's Irish, and they flash a wicked smile. Even old Spark-Plug here got a case on him. He got *her* number. He could work her for anything. -- Say, kiddo,' Agnes went on, manicuring her nails studiously, 'I'm sorry to leave you to-night, but I got a date with Jim, and I'll have to be going pretty soon. I wish you could come, but maybe you wouldn't like it, and anyhow you'd oughtta go to bed.'

Nelly's face fell, but she said nothing except 'I wisht I was home. They're hanging May baskets there to-night.' 'May baskets — what are they?' asked Agnes with the polite tolerance of the city-bred for rustic sports.

'Oh, you pick flowers, and then hang bunches of 'em on people's doors. You ring, and then you run. It's fun ringing doorbells after dark in the spring.'

'Sounds kindda silly, don't it?' remarked Agnes, thinking it over.

'It don't seem silly,' explained Nelly eagerly. 'Lotsa older kids do it. People like the flowers except the old crabs, and you throw cabbages at their doors.' She giggled slightly at the memory.

'The cops would chase you if you tried that around here,' commented Agnes dryly. Then, after reflecting a moment, 'Say, Nelly,' she remarked, 'I wish you'd carry these lily bulbs over to Miss Babcox. She's crazy to get them. She keeps asking me all the time. I said there was some left at the store and I'd bring them. Go on over, Nelly, there's a good kid. I ain't got the time.'

Nelly looked a little blank at this request, but she obediently drew on her slippers with a sigh, and took the bag.

'Do you like the new shade, or is it too yellow?' asked Agnes exhibiting her cheek, with a flaming blush of rouge on it which almost outdid the sunset.

'No. You look swell,' sighed Nelly. 'I wisht I was going somewheres.'

'You go to bed,' said Agnes kissing her impulsively. 'I'll take you out sometime to a swell show, but I can't to-night. I got a date,' and she helped Nelly on her way out of the door with a slight shove.

Hardly had she gone when there was a knock, and Mrs. Sparks, the stout, untidy, and rather unscrupulous-looking landlady stood in the doorway.

'Your fella wants to come up, Agnes,' she said, 'but I told him you said to wait.'

Without pausing for his summons, however, Jim brushed past her into the room. 'What's the big idea, Aggie? Got another fella in here?' he inquired facetiously, as he peered under the bed and behind the screen on which the girls' clothes were hung.

This pleasantry was greeted by a loud laugh from Mrs. Sparks. 'Ain't you comical?' she ejaculated, her sides heaving. 'What do you think we are?'

'It's the kid,' explained Agnes. 'I didn't want no argument before her. I gotta borrow a key, Sparky, mine's lost,' she went on, still prinking at the glass.

Mrs. Sparks stiffened. 'Now, Agnes,' she remonstrated, 'you girls got to show more consideration, losing your keys and coming in so late. It don't look right. And Emma yelling out the window like she does. It makes talk.'

'Aw, don't make me laugh,' snarled Jim, shoving a bill into her hand from which he extracted the key.

'Don't let Nelly get too lonesome, Sparky,' urged Agnes, taking a last comprehensive squint at herself in the glass.

'Speed up, Aggie. What's the kid to you?' snapped Jim with the impatience of a man who has been kept waiting, and he dragged Agnes after him into the hall.

Mrs. Sparks sat herself heavily in a chair, smoothed out the bill, which she contemplated with much satisfaction, and looked about the room. She rocked and waited. The spring noises, the children in the streets, and the lemon-tinted sky were not for her. She had her business to think of. Presently, Nelly's step sounded outside. She opened the door, sighed a little as she looked

about, seeing Mrs. Sparks instead of Agnes, but said, 'Good-evening,' as politely as possible, and reseated herself at the window. She started to kick off her slippers again, but Mrs. Sparks's voice stopped her.

'Nelly,' she said in a flat, impersonal tone, 'there's a fella downstairs wants to see ya.'

'To see *me?*' gasped Nelly incredulously, half rising in her chair.

'Yes, there's a fella I had some business with, who was going by, and saw you girls sitting in the window. He said he had nothing to do this evening, and if you was lonesome he would be glad to drive you round. It'll be pretty in the parks tonight.'

Nelly ran to the mirror, but drew back disconsolately — 'Gee, I'm a fright,' she said. 'My clothes are terrible.'

'Oh, he don't mind,' Mrs. Sparks reassured her; 'I said you was from the country, and he said he hadn't seen a real country girl for a long time. He said he'd like to meet you. He'd be pleased to show you around.'

Nelly flushed with pleasure, but pouted. 'What did you say I was from the country for? He'll think I'm a regular hick. Is it all right to have him up here?'

'I don't know any other place you can have him,' answered Mrs. Sparks dryly. 'I guess he could figure out where you come from without my telling him,' and she hauled herself panting from her chair. 'Come on up!' she shouted down the stairs; and presently the figure of a slender, stylishly dressed, sleek-haired young man appeared in the doorway.

'Let me introduce Miss Nelly McQuade,' announced Mrs. Sparks with formal correctness. 'And you' — she hesitated — 'I didn't quite get your name.'

'Thomas. Mr. Thomas,' he answered, and added politely to Mrs. Sparks, but with a faint wink and motion of his head toward the door — 'Won't you sit down, Mrs. Sparks?'

'No, I must be going,' she answered. But she gave him a slight poke, as she passed him on the way out.

Mr. Thomas approached Nelly with the blandishing smile of the professional 'masher.' He bent toward her, showing all his white teeth — 'How about a ride, girlie? You mustn't sit here all alone. You'll be talking to yourself. I'll show you some parks prettier than any country *you* ever saw.'

'I wisht I was in the country right now,' burst

out Nelly quickly. 'The kids are hanging May baskets there to-night.'

Thomas looked at her, slightly taken aback at this response. 'May baskets! I'd kindda forgotten about May baskets. Where do you come from, sister?'

'Oh, a little place you never heard of. East Fairville's the name of it,' answered Nelly. 'I suppose you never heard of May baskets, either. No one has around here.'

Thomas had turned suddenly while she was speaking, and leaned against the window looking out. 'No, I never heard of 'em,' he said slowly. There was a pause, during which Nelly looked shyly at him. Then Thomas broke it with an effort. 'Was it East Fairville, you said? I think I met a fella once from down that way. Mackie was his name. Ever hear of any family by the name of Mackie around there?' His voice had changed from its earlier tone in a manner painfully evident to himself, but fortunately imperceptible to Nelly, who was too intent upon talking about home to notice anything else.

'Sure,' she assented eagerly. 'There's Mackies there. I've heard of a Tom Mackie, who left town. I never knew him. That's probably who it was.'

'He said he had a sister. Kindda cute kid he said she was,' went on Thomas slowly, still looking out of the window.

'That's probably Mary,' laughed Nelly delightedly. 'I went to school with Mary.'

'You went to school with Mary?' cried Thomas, wheeling around quickly and staring at her.

'Sure. She was in my class. I remember talking to Mary — must have been about a year ago this time, for the lilacs were in bud. The Mackies had a big lilac bush right by the gate, and Mary said how lonesome she got. There used to be an old Mr. Videtto, who ran the band, and we could hear him playing his violin alone, way up on House Hill. And Mary said how lonesome it was in the spring to listen to him. She said she couldn't hardly stand it. Music way off sounds awful lonesome in the country.'

'An old wop in my town played like that,' murmured Thomas with a slight shiver, and turned again to the window.

There was a slight pause, and then Nelly added meditatively — 'I never saw Mary after that. She left town. Ran away with a fella, they said. I don't know. I always liked Mary.'

Thomas had given another start, and put his hand up to his mouth. Then he turned with a

nervous jerk, and seated himself on one of the beds looking down through his knees to the floor.

'I suppose no one else could understand why old Videtto's fiddle on House Hill in the spring could drive a kid outta town,' he said slowly, half to himself. 'But I can understand it. I'm not sure, now you speak of it, that it didn't drive me out.'

'Drive you out?' said Nelly, startled. 'Did you know Videtto?'

'No, I didn't know him, but we had an old wop just like him. — Say, kid, when you going back?' he asked, suddenly looking up.

'I ain't going back,' answered Nelly with a slight pout, as one who had listened to such a question before. 'It's too lonesome, and, besides, I gotta earn some money and get some clothes. My clothes are terrible. I just gotta get some new ones,' and she looked ruefully down at her grubby little gingham.

'Oh, your clothes are all right. Why don't you go home and teach school, or work in the post-office, or something?' he inquired somewhat vaguely. 'You're lonesome here to-night. You said you wished you were back home.'

'I'm lonesome to-night, but I ain't always going

to be. Agnes is going to take me out. She said she would. She's going to teach me to dance as soon as I get some clothes. I just can't stand it at home, sitting in the evenings and listening, and not doing anything.'

'Old Videtto will stop playing sometime,' commented Thomas.

'What if he does? Then it will just be the frogs croaking down in Duck Pond all night, and frogs are just as lonesome as music. They make you feel about the same,' answered Nelly with a rueful little laugh, which Thomas echoed shortly.

He, too, had heard the frogs and the fiddle through the long summer evenings. In fact, in the silence he almost heard them now. But an abrupt knock broke in on their memories.

'That's probably Miss Babcox after her bulbs,' said Nelly, rising. 'I took them to her, but she wasn't in, so I told some kids to tell her that I had 'em.'

Thomas rose hastily to his feet, and, with the promptitude of long practice, headed for the screen. 'No use her seeing me here,' he explained; 'the scarcer the fewer' — with which cryptic saying he disappeared and Nelly opened the door politely to an elderly school-teacher, who, with many words and much fussy peering about, took

her bulbs. She offered payment; she was grateful; she looked for little stones to prop her bulbs in a dish; she could not find them; she peered about perilously near the screen; she felt that the stones must be in the bag; she found positively that they were not — and so on, and so on, until Nelly, with many promises to secure little stones for her at the five-and-ten, shoved her gently out of the door, and sat down breathless on the bed.

'She's a real nice lady,' she explained to Thomas, who emerged grunting from his shelter.

'Why don't you live with her then?' he inquired. 'She's a nut, of course, but she's all right.'

'Sure, she's all right,' agreed Nelly with a sigh. 'She's been to Normal and knows a lot — too much for me, I guess.'

'She learned a lot about gardening I'll say, burying bulbs in stones — what does the old lady think she's going to hatch?' and he minced about peering in the corners, while Nelly tittered appreciatively.

'They're lily bulbs,' she said. 'You stick 'em in stones and water, and they grow up real pretty. Smell a little like lilacs. We used to have some in school ourselves.'

'Oh, that's right. The Chinks sell 'em,' answered Thomas. 'I got mixed up with a Chink in

a laundry once. I was fooling with some fellas I knew, and the old boy hid me under the wash. I remember seeing those things lying around. Funny old Chink. Couldn't say anything but "Me no sabe. Me no sabe."' And with his hands folded in front and his head on one side, Thomas mimicked the old Chinaman, totally oblivious of the fact that Nelly had risen in alarmed amazement and was staring at him with paling cheeks.

'You're Slim Mackie,' she whispered, slowly backing away from him. 'And you steal cars and sell dope, and have just got out of the Pen.'

Mackie turned as if he had been struck, and faced her. Then, seeing the genuine horror in her face, he turned back, looked on the ground, and murmured cynically — 'Aside from that I'm all right, eh?'

'And your name ain't Thomas — it's Mackie — unless' — the light breaking — 'you're Thomas Mackie, Mary's brother from East Fairville?' He answered nothing to this, and, still staring, she marveled, 'I never supposed that any one from East Fairville could be so bad. So you lived down on the Flats next to the Beldens. Say, you knew their house burned down, didn't you?' she asked eagerly, for the moment forgetting to whom she spoke.

'No. Did our house catch?' he gasped back, also forgetting.

'No. Only the shed by the snow-apple tree.'

'I hope it didn't hurt that tree. Those were swell apples.'

'The best I ever tasted. No, they saved the tree, every one was so crazy about those apples. And Dave — you remember Dave?'

Mackie nodded.

'Well, something awful funny happened about Dave. They had a pig, and the pig got loose, and Dave —'

But in the midst of her eagerness her voice trailed off and stopped. Suddenly both became aware that she was not speaking to an East Fairville neighbor, but to a city thief and dope-seller, recently released from prison. Both sat down in silence on opposite beds, staring at the floor.

'I wonder where Mary is,' murmured Mackie, poking the rug with his foot, and rattling his keys in his nervous fingers. 'Same fix you are, likely, only worse.'

'How did you get to be so bad?' implored Nelly when the silence was too ominous to be borne.

'Got in the wrong crowd when I struck town, just like you have. I don't want to say anything

against your friends, and all that, but how did they know all about me if they weren't in the same gang? Stick around them and see where you'll be by Christmas. You'll be running to any sheik that whistles. You ought to go home.'

At this point there was one of Mrs. Sparks's loud knocks, and in response to Nelly's 'Come in,' the landlady appeared in the doorway.

She glanced curiously at the two silent occupants of the room, both of whom seemed to be taking their pleasures so sadly.

'You homesick, too?' she laughed to Mackie. 'I don't wantta interfere, but the kids are fooling with your car, and may hurt it. I thought maybe you'd better go if you was going. But I don't wantta interfere.'

'Interfere! You? You wouldn't interfere with murder,' snapped Mackie angrily, as the landlady waddled in confusion from the room. He rose to his feet uncertainly and took out his watch. 'I gotta go, Nelly. I'm leaving town right away,' he said, reaching for his hat.

'Gotta go?' cried Nelly, almost in tears. 'Don't go yet,' and she ran to the window impulsively looking out.

She did not know what she wanted. She had nothing to suggest. She just knew that to stay

alone in that unwholesome room with all the world of spring and beauty calling her outside was more than she could bear. The prospect of many more such evenings was heart-breaking. Mackie stood beside her for a moment looking out on the crescent moon in a paling sky, and as he stood, the hand-organ which had moved on to a more distant street, broke waveringly in across the silence.

Mackie put his arm around her and his cheek against hers. 'Old Videtto's playing on House Hill, eh, kiddo?' he whispered in her ear.

Nelly whirled around and clutched his arm.

'Oh, don't go! I'll go somewhere with you. I don't care how bad you've been. I can't bear it here being so lonesome,' she sobbed. 'Ain't you never going to take me no place?' she sobbed as the young man hesitated.

Mackie dragged himself away almost roughly and started for the door. 'Not while they're hanging May baskets on old lady Belden's door and the snow-apple tree's in bud,' he answered half to himself. Then he turned back suddenly and drew a tight wad of bills from his pocket, thrusting it into Nelly's hand. 'Take it, Nelly,' he urged. 'You'll need it. You buy a ticket home,' and again he made for the door.

But Nelly followed him. 'Oh, I can't take it!' she cried, trying ineffectually to force the money into his hands. 'Take it back! I can't take it!'

For one moment Mackie turned, caught her in his arms, and pressed her closely to him. 'Take it, little sister,' he whispered; 'I'm not giving it to you. I'm giving it — to — Mary.'

He turned quickly and the door slammed behind him. Nelly ran to the window, the discarded bills falling on the floor, and leaned far out. But his car was on another street. She could not see him. He was gone. The colors faded slowly from the sky. The hand-organ played its gay and wistful tunes on a still more distant street. The girls with their sweethearts sauntered, idly laughing, through the twilight. But Nelly, her head buried in her arms and her shoulders shaking with sobs, was left — alone.

XV
THE CHRISTMAS WEDDING

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'Mores' is the term applied by social psychologists to the habits or folkways of any group. It includes the morals and customs adopted by any individual as a member of the society into which he is born, and which he accepts as a matter of course from his surroundings. The lax moral standards and ideals of family life, which are the mores of certain classes, are accepted by the younger members of the group as uncritically as the stricter standards of a more conventional society are accepted by its members. When these lax morals conflict with the higher ideals of a society in whose ethics they have not been trained, the strain of adjustment is always difficult, and sometimes impossible.

XV

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To any who might be disposed to criticize the casual manner in which Amy and Josephine lived their lives, it is only fair to explain that their mother had decided soon after their birth that she preferred the company of her star boarder to her husband and had eloped, leaving the two babies to their father's rather ineffectual care. He also very soon found that he had made a mistake in the choice of his second wife, and this lady found herself one day in sole charge of the two children who constituted the only legacy left her by her departing mate. When she in turn married again, the bond with the two little girls had become so remote that her new husband might be pardoned for declining to accept any responsibility for the children of the first wife of his wife's first husband. So Amy and Josephine drifted from neighbors and orphanages to factories and rooming-houses, their lives still further complicated by Amy's baby — the reminder of some half-forgotten tipsy joy-rides when she was only fifteen. The two girls had worked together in the

Acme Paper Mill, and the baby had got along with what attention it could manage to extract from the rooming-house where they lodged.

The sisters were now seventeen and eighteen respectively. Their temperaments were very different, as were their looks, although both possessed as their only inheritance from their parents that rather dubious gift — the gift of beauty. Josephine was reticent and statuesque with shining red hair and the stubbornness that often goes with it. Amy was small and gay and talkative, and neither her temperament nor her physique fitted her for the long hours of physical labor which was all she was trained to do. Indeed, Amy seemed so entirely unfitted for the work she was doing in the paper mill, that Larry, a handsome young teamster in the neighborhood, had offered her a share in his modest apartment. 'I can't marry you yet, girlie,' he said; 'I got a wife down Texas way somewheres, but if you want some place to take care of the kid, and don't mind doing a little housework, you can make a home for all three of us.'

So Amy, much to her delight, found herself relieved from factory hours, the mistress of a room and a kitchenette; and to the three were often added a fourth in the person of Josephine, who

had a room elsewhere, but who was fond of dropping in of an evening. It was a great relief to Amy to be freed from the work in the mill, even though she did not like housework much better. In fact, it must be confessed that Amy didn't like any kind of work. She had no sentimental attitude toward the dignity of labor. She frankly loved to do nothing — to lie with a bag of candy and read the movie magazines, only bestirring herself when she was obliged to make a selection from the delicatessen for Larry's evening meal. To open a can of beans and fry a pork chop for him was about all that Larry asked of her, and he was not even exacting about the punctuality of this repast, which was fortunate, since Amy seldom got started on her preparations for supper until his foot was on the stair.

The reason for his patience in this regard was his abject devotion to his evening paper. Every night as he started home he bought his paper on the corner, climbed his stairs with anticipation, and settled into his rocking-chair with a sigh of content. His shoes came off, his feet were on the radiator, and as he slowly and conscientiously absorbed every event on the sporting pages and the comic strips, he asked nothing of the world but to be let alone. Surely a small thing to ask, but

it was more than Amy could supply. Amy had by evening exhausted all her candy and all her picture magazines, and she wanted to talk. She was affectionate and wanted to be petted. Many an evening Josephine had watched the scenes between the two with a growing concern.

'Leave the guy be,' she would whisper to Amy when she was teasing Larry for a kiss or trying to sit on his lap, and prevent his reading his paper. 'Just leave him be. There's many a woman would be glad to see her man in no worse mischief than reading his paper.'

'He ain't my man,' whimpered Amy.

'All the more reason to leave him in peace until he is,' advised Josephine dryly.

'Well, why can't he talk to me?' Amy would complain. 'I been alone all day and I'm lonesome.'

'Why not go back to the mill if you're so crazy for a crowd?' Josephine would inquire sardonically, well knowing Amy's dislike of work.

Sometimes she would succeed in dragging Amy away from her undemonstrative lover, but sometimes she would not succeed. And in the midst of Larry's angry but ineffectual requests to be let alone, Josephine would steal away to the room of Mrs. Murphy who kept the rooming-house, and

deplore Amy's lack of judgment. 'If she'd only stop jawing the guy till she's got the right to jaw. When he's got the divorce and she's got the ring, then it's time enough to give him the rough stuff,' confided the anxious elder sister.

'That's right,' agreed Mrs. Murphy rocking comfortably. 'You have to talk to get 'em and shut up to keep 'em. Many's the girl I've said that to, but there's some can't learn that lesson.'

One March evening matters came to a crisis between Larry and Amy, and as usual the newspaper was the cause. Larry had settled himself for a particularly delicious hour with his sporting pages. He had been driving his truck all day in the rain, and was in a mood to appreciate a good dinner, a warm radiator, and the story, round by round, of a prize fight on which he had both bet and won. He fairly oozed anticipation as he settled himself in his shirt-sleeves for his study of the fight. To try to snatch this pleasure from him was about as unwise as to attempt to snatch a bone from a famished dog just as his teeth have settled into it. But this was just what Amy had determined to do, and unfortunately Josephine did not happen to be there to stop her. Amy had stayed indoors all day on account of a fretful baby and the rain. She had not even made her

usual pilgrimage to the delicatessen. She had decided that they would eat at a restaurant and that Larry should then take her to a dance. To this end she seated herself on the arm of Larry's chair and began to tease him. In vain he tried to look over her head at the story of the battle. She put her hands over his eyes. He pushed her to one side. She pouted that he did not love her. He pushed her to the other side. She snatched the paper. He tried to get it back, and in the scuffle he pushed her to the floor. At this she began to cry, still holding on to the paper on which she sat. Larry, now thoroughly exasperated, twisted her arm in order to recover his beloved pages.

'Go get the dinner before I get mad,' he ordered.

'We're going to eat out,' sobbed Amy loudly, 'and then you got to take me to the exhibition dance at Luna.'

'Take you nowhere,' roared Larry; 'you get my dinner or you go out and earn your own.'

'You couldn't say that to me if we was married!' screamed Amy.

'That's one good reason why we never will be,' answered Larry savagely, and he began with no more ado to put on his coat, pull his clothes from the closet, and stuff them into a suitcase.

Amy stared at him aghast. Never for a moment had she thought that he would really leave her, although he had often threatened to. Like most girls of her type she had a childish vanity which made it hard for her to realize that any one could really tire of her. Even then, if she had shown some disposition to get Larry's meal and make him comfortable, above all, if she had kept quiet, she might have kept him, and eventually married him. He still longed to read his paper by the warm radiator and he had no hankering to face the rain again so soon. But Amy was possessed by the very demon of perversity. She had never learned to control her feelings and had no idea how to begin. She sobbed and clung to him, though he pushed her off again and again. She demanded that he marry her with an angry insistence that made marriage seem to him the least desirable thing in the world, and as a last straw she snatched back her rival — the newspaper — and tore it into shreds. This was too much for Larry. He snapped the suitcase together and started for the hall.

'You going to leave me?' gasped Amy.

'You bet your life I am!' shouted Larry from the door. 'I didn't ask much from you but some grub, and a little quiet, and you won't give me either.

I'm not marrying again till I find a woman who will,' with which statement he threw some bills at her, and slammed the door behind him.

There was nothing for Amy to do but to lie on the floor and sob, which was where Josephine and Mrs. Murphy found her when they came to call, and to collect the weekly rent, respectively. Between them they helped Amy up from the floor and calmed her down, considerately asking no questions. In fact it was quite unnecessary to ask any. It required no Sherlock Holmes to deduce what had happened, especially as Mrs. Murphy's hearing was excellent, and she had rather made it her business to keep track, from the hall, of how the family affairs were going on. 'Rent money must come from some one, quarrels or no quarrels,' as she often remarked. 'It pays to know how the land lays.'

'I suppose you'll be looking for your old job at the mill again, and I might as well move my things over,' volunteered Josephine after a decent interval — 'that is, if you don't think he is coming back.'

'He won't come back,' sobbed Amy with conviction. 'He's crazy about them baseball players. I bet he's gone South to watch 'em train.'

'Well, well,' sympathized Mrs. Murphy. 'The

fellas are likely to get restless about this time o' year. I always noticed it. Murphy would begin to get his things together along in March.'

'Did he come back?' asked Josephine.

'Not the last time he didn't,' answered Mrs. Murphy dryly.

'Well, this is Larry's last time,' asserted Amy with a flash of insight, as she wiped her eyes.

And being three women who had faced trouble before, and had somehow worried through, they accepted the inevitable, and arranged that Amy should go back to her power machine, that Josephine and Amy should keep the room together, and that Mrs. Murphy should look after the baby for a consideration.

'Some one ought to pinch that guy,' sympathized Mrs. Murphy. 'But, after all, no great harm's done,' she added soothingly, as she creaked out of the room, 'and you've had a good rest.'

The lives of the two girls had always been full of upheaval and disaster, and the next year was destined to be no exception. Although Amy's baby had been a source of great anxiety and expense, yet both girls had been devoted to him, and when he died of the flu their grief was genuine, and the debt they incurred for his forlorn little funeral was one which they would be a long time

in paying. Then Josephine, who had been, hitherto, the quieter and more steady of the two girls, had completely lost her head and her sobriety for a season. She had joined in the diversions of a reckless crowd from whose revels Amy's greater grief had fortunately restrained her, and in less than two years from Larry's departure, the situation of the two sisters had been reversed. Josephine was housed with a little baby at Mrs. Murphy's rooming-house, and Amy, the easy-going and pleasure-loving, was her sole support from the time she left the hospital until she was able to go back to her factory job. The responsibility had brought out more strength in Amy's character than her friends supposed she had.

'Don't fret,' she said to Josephine; 'I got through it, and you can. He's kindda cute, ain't he?' she added, peering into the bundle which the handsome but sulky Josephine was stoically rocking — 'almost as cute as Billy was.' She made no more adverse comments on Josephine's behavior and its consequences than Josephine had made on hers. Both of them took the gambler's attitude toward life. Both had played, and hitherto both had lost. But they were still young, and better luck next time.

Mrs. Murphy, who was kind-hearted despite

the fact that she had no creed in life except that of punctually collecting her rent, was accustomed to sit with Josephine often in the afternoons to cheer her up. The sudden shift from a period of the wildest of carousels to solitude in a rooming-house with a little baby had completely dazed Josephine, and whereas she had a certain stubborn pride of character to bring to the rescue, she lacked Amy's ability to rise quickly and blithely from misfortune. The two women rocked back and forth in the thin December sunshine and waited for Amy to come in and tell them news of the day. Kind as Amy had been to her sister, her kindness was not without a certain evident satisfaction in being for the time sole dictator in the family affairs She knew that Josephine was absolutely dependent on her, and she enjoyed the freedom from her sister's domination to which she had usually submitted. As for the proud Josephine, it was not easy for her to sit in silence awaiting Amy's comings and goings and accepting her decisions. But without a cent in the world and with a four-weeks-old baby, one learns discretion, so when Amy sauntered in much later than usual, looking very gay and pleased with herself, Josephine made no complaints over her tardiness, but rocked on, giving her sister but one

comprehensive glance, and then looking fixedly out of the window.

'Been Christmas shopping with Mame,' said Amy cheerfully. 'She got some toys for the kids, and I bought a few presents myself.' She tossed her packages on the bed and warmed her hands at the radiator, gazing at them critically.

Finally she held up her left hand to her audience and exhibited a platinum-colored ring upon it. 'I got married to-day,' she announced.

'Yes,' said Josephine, not to be outdone in nonchalance; 'I noticed you did.'

'You noticed it already? Well, why didn't you say something?' pouted Amy, still admiring the ring.

'It's none of my business unless you make it so,' answered Josephine, shrugging her shoulders.

As for Mrs. Murphy, she rocked on in silence. She would know all in due time.

Amy leaned against the radiator and gave the two other women a sidelong glance. 'He's an ugly little runt. He's a wop,' she finally ventured.

'A wop?' echoed Josephine. There was an interval of silence, and then her curiosity got the better of her. She stopped rocking and stared at her sister. 'If you're married, where is he?' she asked suspiciously. 'I'll bet you're kidding us.'

'No, I ain't. On the level I'm married. He's back in the shop. I told him there was no use in wasting a whole afternoon to get married in. Besides, I wanted to go shopping with Mame. The stores look swell just before Christmas.'

'Some dagoes make good money,' finally remarked Mrs. Murphy, 'but they're usually tight with it.'

'Well, that's all settled,' answered Amy. 'He takes Josephine and the baby if he takes me, and I quit the factory. He's said that before witnesses. His name's Tony — Tony Firmenti.'

'That's a hard name to remember,' commented the landlady.

'It is at first,' apologized Amy, 'but just say to yourself — he ain't spoiled, he's only fermented, and that helps. That's what I do.'

It turned out that Tony was a pastry cook, past his first youth, with an eye for beauty which Amy satisfied. The affair had not been entered upon rashly — that was the amazing part of it. For Josephine, under the circumstances, to show a calculating disposition would have surprised no one, but for the demonstrative and scatter-brained Amy to arrange her marriage with an eye solely to the main chance showed that, whether for good or ill, life had taught her a few lessons.

She had met Tony in his own shop, had seen at a glance that he had material benefits to offer, and had made up her mind that he should offer them to her. This the susceptible Tony had cheerfully done. It must be said in her defense that neither she nor her sister had ever in their lives (outside of the movies) witnessed a single happy marriage in which love and a fair amount of comfort were combined. Their tempestuous lives had vibrated between 'homes,' domestic friction, and sordid romance, and both of them were unconscious cynics in the matter. Marriage, like old age, seemed from their observation to be an inevitable drab ending to the dangerous gayety of youth. It would be charming if one could ever hold one's sweetheart, either before or after marriage. But since one seldom did, then one must do the next best thing, and marry some one else as painlessly and comfortably as possible. So Amy, after some anxious speculation before the glass, as to how long her good looks would last, had decided that she would better settle down at once, and she had also decided that Josephine should settle down with her. She gave up romance as a youthful dream, and chose instead the substantial status of married life, a house, a shop, a middle-aged husband, and even a mother-in-law.

'He's a Catholic, so I turned,' she went on. 'The Pope lives over there, they say.'

'It's a good religion,' nodded Mrs. Murphy. 'Murphy was a Catholic, and my first was a Jew. Heaven and Hell is full of both, I guess. I've had all kinds as roomers, and they're about alike.'

'I went in a church and saw them do it,' mused Amy. 'It don't look hard to do if you get used to it. Will you turn Catholic, too, if I get you a good man?' she asked her sister.

'I'd try anything once,' answered Josephine with a grim smile.

'It's much harder to learn to cook than to say your prayers a new way,' said Mrs. Murphy sagaciously. 'You ain't so strong on cooking, Amy, as I remember it.'

'Spaghetti and snails is all they eat, I've heard,' giggled the bride. 'Anyhow, Tony's a cook.'

'They'll be here any minute — I most forgot,' she said, looking at the clock. Then, standing in front of her sister, she added decisively, 'Josephine, your husband was killed in a railroad wreck last fall — do you get that? Tony's bringing his brother with him for a little party, and we got to say something to explain the kid.'

'He must be a dumb-bell if you can fool him with that old gag,' answered Josephine dryly.

'They won't stand for the kid, wreck or no wreck.'

'Yes, they will, they got to,' said Amy stubbornly. 'Foreigners like kids and they like red hair — you'll get by with Frank all right. That sounds like them now,' and leaning over she whispered with slight embarrassment — 'Don't laugh when you first see them — they're not so bad even if you can hear their neckties a block away.'

'Some dagoes are swell-looking fellas,' said Mrs. Murphy politely.

'Well, Tony ain't. That's a cinch,' returned Amy with great positiveness, and at that point there was a loud knock on the door and Amy opened it to two very short, swarthy Italians, in bright blue suits and shiny shoes. Both of them carried large bundles and both of their faces showed a wide expanse of very white teeth. They laid their bundles on the table, and then one, obviously Tony, put his arm around Amy, and beamed on the company.

'Ain't I got the pretty wife?' he asked. 'Ain't she pretty enough for two?'

Frank and Mrs. Murphy smiled sympathetically. 'Sure she is,' answered the genial landlady, and then seeing that Amy and Josephine, having

caught each other's eye, were about to go off into a spasm of nervous giggles over the somewhat grotesque brothers, she came to the rescue. 'Amy, you forgot your manners — ain't you going to introduce us? I'm Mrs. Murphy, and pleased to meet you,' she said, shaking hands.

Amy made a last effort to pull herself together. 'And this is my sister Jo. Her name is Mrs. — Wreck — and her husband was wrecked — in a wreck.'

At this both girls gave up the struggle and shook helplessly with hysterical laughter. The amiable grooms fortunately were too good-natured to mind any hilarity, and laughed loudly in sympathy, although they were obviously ignorant of what they were laughing at.

With Mrs. Murphy's help they undid the packages which disclosed a large frosted cake, some bread and sausage, and some soda pop. Then they stood back and surveyed the result with some pride.

'That's a Christmas party all right, ain't it?' inquired Tony. 'Ain't some one going to drink our health now we got married?' he asked the company. He uncorked the bottles and passed them around.

'Ain't you going to drink to our health, Jo?

Can't you make a toast?' asked Amy, but her voice trembled, and Josephine was on the verge of tears.

The change in their destinies had been too sudden. Half an hour before she was a penniless girl alone in a rooming-house, rocking a baby whom no one wanted, and too dazed by the problem of how to feed it and herself to make one plan. Now, by a turn of fortune's wheel, a dull domestic haven stretched in front of her, soon doubtless to be shared by Frank or some one like him — respectability, monotony, the beginning of safety, and the end of romance. Youth was over, and middle age had set in. Even Amy's nerves were shaky under the strain, and as for Jo, she had recently gone through too great a shock to bear much more. She was in no condition to face this crisis with any poise, much less with courage or good judgment. It was plain that she could not even speak. She gazed in front of her as into a yawning pit, and the sympathetic Italians, remembering her dead husband, nodded soothingly and murmured, 'Too bad. That's all right.'

Again Mrs. Murphy came to the rescue. 'Some one's got to drink your health. I'll do it,' she said. 'Here's to you two fine fellas. May the second wedding follow not long after the first. And

here's to Amy, and Josephine, who's been through a peck of trouble, but who has past them now. They're going to have a Merry Christmas and plenty of them. Merry Christmas I say to everybody.'

'That's a swell toast, Mrs. Murphy,' said Amy, her eyes wet. 'Come on, Jo,' putting her arm around her and drawing her into the circle; 'Mrs. Murphy's about right. It ain't so bad as it looks. It might be a lot worse. Our troubles are going to end. Tony and Frank are good guys. They'll treat us swell. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year — everybody.'

'That's the way to talk,' said Mrs. Murphy comfortably.

'Brava! Brava!' echoed Tony and Frank as they drained their glasses.

XVI
SEVEN P.M.

SEVEN P.M.

Fatigue — exhaustion of strength caused by excessive exertion. If fatigue is abnormally continued, the nervous system goes through a stage of heightened sensitivity, when it is affected by stimuli which would be relatively unimportant at other times. People who are in a continual state of overfatigue, and who are unable to recuperate by the usual means of quiet, privacy, and change of scene, become chronically irritable.

XVI

SEVEN P.M.

Mrs. Nyack stood beside the stove on a hot May evening poking the pork chops doubtfully with a fork and holding on to her cheek. It was the end of a particularly wearing week. The kitchen was hot, the other three rooms were hot, and every one was late. Mrs. Nyack had been waiting for the whole family for over an hour, alternately heating up the chops as she thought that she heard her husband's step upon the stairs, then turning out the gas again, and applying the oil of cloves to her tooth. The later Mr. Nyack and Joe arrived, the more likely they were to demand their dinner the instant they opened the door. Both men did hard manual labor and were furiously hungry when they came home. They could hardly be blamed for wanting their dinner and wanting it at once. On the other hand, if their arrival varied by an hour, how could they expect their meals to be ready on the dot? Both the appetite of the men and the inability of Mrs. Nyack to appease it instantly at an uncertain hour were reasonable. But the Nyacks were seldom reasonable at six P.M. and never at seven.

The first to arrive was May. She worked at a box factory, and had her Saturday afternoons off. This year for the first time she had spent her Saturdays as she saw fit. Until she was sixteen, she had given up her holiday to the weekly cleaning of the four rooms of the Nyack apartment. This spring she had announced that, since she gave seven dollars of her weekly thirteen toward the family budget, she would not give her Saturday afternoons. 'You take that or nothing,' was her ultimatum; 'and if you crab, I'll leave like Louisa.'

This was a serious threat. Louisa was the eldest child and she had worked for three years in a printer's office. Her mother had always insisted on taking her entire pay envelope, although Louisa had protested bitterly, but in vain. So she bided her time. On her eighteenth birthday had occurred the great emancipation proclamation in the Nyack family. Louisa had removed herself and her belongings to a rooming-house, and it developed that in this strange country no law could force her to come home again. An occasional bill she gave her mother for old times' sake, and she often paid visits at meal-times — meals for which she scrupulously paid. But to come back and live with her family, she refused. Since May still lived at home, she knew that she owed

her family something, but she did not propose to have her mother issue back to her at her own discretion the money which she had herself earned. Nor would she allow her mother to spend it for her. The Nyack tradition for generations had been that children, before their marriage, owed all their earnings to their parents. The generation now coming on disagreed with this precedent, and insisted upon doing as it chose. So, although the children and their parents loved each other, relations were somewhat strained.

Now, as it turned out, May had had her Saturday afternoon, but it had not been successful. Bud Bryan, who for three successive Saturdays had waited for her on the drug-store corner, in order to accompany her to Dreamland Park, had not kept his tryst to-day. May had gone to the park with a crowd of girls, and on the dance floor there was Bud, dancing with the girl who took the tickets at the movie theater. This was a severe blow. To see her 'steady' dancing with an overdressed blonde in red shoes took the sunshine out of life. In fact, it robbed life itself of any reason for being. All that May could do, she had done.

She left the park in a rage, and spent five dollars for some green King Tut sandals, with green silk

stockings to match. She would show Bud whether she or the theatrical blonde was the 'classier' dresser. But when May entered the kitchen where Mrs. Nyack's flushed face shone over the frying-pan, she braced herself for the storm. Useless to explain to her mother why green sandals were necessary.

'You take them things off!' ordered her mother, the moment her impatient eyes fell on May's feet. 'You spending money on fancy truck, and me with my teeth, and all!' she shouted. 'You take them off, I say!'

'If I take them off, I take myself off!' May shouted back.

'You crook!' screamed her mother in exasperation.

'Shut your face,' answered May, in the same key.

The argument continued in this pitch until the door opened and Louisa stepped in.

'Any eats to-night?' she inquired, laying a dollar bill ostentatiously upon the table.

She listened to the last reverberations of May's 'shut-ups.'

'Still quarreling, I see,' she observed with a shrug; and then, 'You can stop your mouths, right now, or me and my dollar takes a walk,' she

added, and her hand started toward the bill. Her mother's hand, however, reached it first.

'Well, look at them green legs,' cried Mrs. Nyack, 'and ask why I'm jawing, and me with my face aching all the week.'

She was almost in tears, but she knew already that her case was lost. She saw May glance at Louisa and heard her sneer, 'Better take your dollar and ramble, old thing; same old hole.'

Their mother knew that if she said another word Louisa, and probably May, would both be off. Her hand tightened on the dollar. She needed it toward the new teeth, and, besides that, Louisa was her daughter and she wanted to see her. So she gulped down her sobs and the wrath which the wanton green slippers aroused in her, and turned on the gas again.

By this time Mr. Nyack was on the threshold with his dinner pail. He had wielded a pick in the hot sun for nine hours, the perspiration had made paths through the dirt on his face, hunger clawed at his vitals like a gnawing fox — and here were his three women having words with each other, and the meat not on the table.

'Dry up, you damned women!' he roared. And because of some remnants of fatherly authority, or because they thought his advice was sound,

they did stop their clamor, and drew up their chairs.

'You sit down, ma,' said May, ready to make amends, 'I'll dish it up,' and she placed the plates of chops and potatoes, again reheated over the gas, before the family.

'Leave some for Joe,' sighed her mother, 'and give me my coffee. I can't chew.'

She was glad to sit down, even though the meals were only an aggravation to her at this stage of her dentistry.

Mrs. Nyack had put off getting her false teeth as long as she could, both on account of the expense and because she had refused to consider her teeth all her life, and she hated to begin. When her first child had come home from school, with a small card on which was printed — 'I promise to brush my teeth every day,' and had pinned it over the sink, she was mystified. And when the young enthusiast proceeded to fly at the inside of her mouth with a small brush, the mother was horrified. She tolerated any such ceremony in her kitchen only because she was more in awe of the public school teacher than she was of the Pope. In every previous encounter with the school system she had been worsted, and she knew that she would be in this. So she kept silence, but she

was utterly unconvinced. As her successive children came home with ridiculous little brushes, she accepted the mania only as one more feature of an unaccountable country.

'They'll be taking a broom to their stummicks next,' she confided to her husband, who was as much bewildered by the performance as she. Although the parents could not stop their children, both of them resolutely declined to join in the obscene rite themselves. Now at forty, Mrs. Nyack was parting with her last teeth after weeks of torture. Every one lost teeth at forty, as a matter of course. That she accepted as part of life. But twenty-five dollars for an American set was indeed an expense which demanded all the help which the children could give. And here were green shoes, and Louisa ready to walk off with her dollar unless her mother kept quiet. She sighed heavily over her coffee. All the family contrary, and she with only the strength of a week of 'spoon-food' to help her keep the peace.

'I've got a new job,' announced Louisa, amid the silence of the dinner table. 'The printing trade is too dirty and no raise in sight. I heard about a swell job from a fella who got his printing done at our place. It's pressed-aluminum-household-utensils,' she rattled off all in one word, as in-

comprehensible to the rest of them as if she spoke in Arabic. 'I start in next Monday with the firm — canvassing,' she went on. 'He says you make a lot of money on it too — salary and commission on the raffles.'

'On the raffles?' asked May. 'What raffles?'

'The raffles of the pressed-aluminum-household-utensils,' said Louisa. 'You go to the house and get the lady to give you her kitchen. Then you give her a meal cooked in the never-burn kettles, and then you raffle off the kettles to her after she's eat the dinner. The fella says you make a lotta money if you work it right.'

'Sounds good,' said May. 'Any chance for me? I've got a place to hash at a hot-dog booth myself, but this sounds better. I'm tired of the factory,' and she thought of the faithless Bud. It seemed to her that never again could she face the girls in her section, who had witnessed her discomfiture on the Dreamland dance floor.

Mr. and Mrs. Nyack had not the slightest idea of what this talk was about. Aluminum-raffles in other people's kitchens — it meant nothing to them. But money was an idea which they could grasp.

'How much more do you make?' asked Mr. Nyack.

'What's the commission?' demanded Joe, who had just come in.

'Who pays for the dinner?' inquired May.

'Who cooks the dinner?' murmured Mrs. Nyack faintly. 'You ain't much of a cook, Louisa.'

And then too late she saw her mistake. Louisa rose from the table in wrath.

'I didn't come home to answer questions,' she said angrily. 'You don't understand what I tell you, so what's the use of tellin'? I pay my own bills, don't I? I ask you for nothing, do I? Do ya think this dinner was worth the dollar I gave you? Can't I cook as well as this if I have to? Couldn't I have got the same for thirty-five cents downtown, and gone to a show beside?' she asked, her voice rising.

As a matter of fact, she was rather hazy on the details of her pressed-aluminum venture herself, but she had no idea of letting them guess it. She was very proud of her independence and her cleverness. She intended to dazzle them with her new job, but she had no idea of having it questioned.

May, glad to have attention diverted from her green shoes, made no effort to quell the rising storm, but Joe, who had been quietly eating his dinner, with a mysterious package by his side, felt

that the time had now come to produce it. Joe was an odd combination of a working-man and a small boy. He was a heavy good-looking fellow of nineteen, but heedless as a child. He was his mother's favorite. He did hauling for a greenhouse which for the last two weeks had been plastered with the sign — 'Say it with flowers to Mother on Mothers' Day.' This sign had been the subject of considerable discussion among the men during their lunch hour, and Joe, who was really fond of his mother, had had his chivalry stirred. He would make his mother a present. He had, however, no idea of saying it with flowers. To pay good money for flowers is something no Nyack would do except for a burial. But there was something else he decided to say it with, and, unable in his eagerness to wait until the morrow, he shoved a large package onto the table, toward his mother. Louisa might as well see that she was not the only one with big ideas. And as for May and her green slippers — his chest swelled to think how much more generous he was than she.

'Two bucks,' he murmured in an aside to May, but his father heard it.

'Two bucks?' he echoed with a puzzled frown.

As for Mrs. Nyack, she stared at the bundle without speaking. It was too large to be teeth,

and what else would her children be wasting 'two bucks' on, with that dentist bill to pay? As for Mothers' Day she had never heard of it. She was entirely unaccustomed to any sentimental attitude toward motherhood, and the gallant desire in Joe's breast to 'say it with something,' in emulation of the well-dressed American men who came to the greenhouse, was something she was incapable of understanding. She was so tired and worried by the vagaries of Louisa and May that she felt that she could stand nothing more, but she undid the strings doubtfully, and opened with caution the two boxes which lay within. She raised the lid of one box and then of the other and gazed at the contents with stupefaction —

Caramels. Not one box, but two.

'Two bucks' for two boxes of tough chewing candy which made her jaws ache to look at, and which made her heart sick when she thought of the wasted money — Then, instead of her heart sinking, her anger rose. Selfish children, all of them. Or were they teasing her? Or were they going crazy? She rose from the table and thrust out her forefinger at Joe.

'So you spend your money on muck I can't eat, and call it a present, do you?' she cried, her color rising with her voice. 'Where is the money you

owe me? Did them boxes cost you two bucks, you young liar? You know they didn't. You gambled away your money and stole the boxes, you crook. The police will be here next, and me always an honest woman,' she screamed, too worn out and hysterical to notice the utterly crestfallen look on her son's face.

For a moment he looked as if he would cry with disappointment, and Louisa, who had always babied Joe more or less, hastily interposed —'Oh, Ma, shut up,' she said. 'That's on the straight. They cost that much. It's a swell present. That's right, to-morrow is Mothers' Day,' she added soothingly.

But Mothers' Day meant nothing to Mrs. Nyack, or to Mr. Nyack either. He turned on his son in enraged astonishment.

'So you're lifting boxes and gambling away your money, are you?' he shouted, and then he added, from sheer nervousness and from long habit, the most opprobrious epithet that one man can give another. Joe rose to his feet like a cat and picked up his chair by the back. The others rose with him.

Obviously, if Joe was what his father called him, it was his mother who was demeaned by the epithet. Such an accusation was more than speech. It was violence. And from a husband to

his son, before his wife — it was almost murder. Of course, Mr. Nyack had meant nothing of the kind. He and his wife had had their daily quarrels, to be sure. But he knew well enough that she had been entirely faithful to him and to his interests. His epithet to his son had been merely a manner of speaking. It had slipped out, with no reference to its meaning, because Mr. Nyack was tired and cross, and his children seemed to be smothering him with their outlandish whims. But when he saw his two daughters rising from the table against him, backed by an hysterical wife, and a son ready to throw a chair at him, it entirely destroyed what self-restraint he had left after so wearing a day. He grasped his own chair aloft and threw it blindly. It hit the stovepipe, knocking it clear from the wall, and distributing the soot over the table and over the heads of the three screaming women.

Joe, his feelings a blind mixture of hurt pride, chagrin over his ill-chosen present, his realization that his mother could not be made to understand his motive, and wild wrath over his father's unjust epithet, flew at his father and pinned him to the floor by his throat. He began choking him so successfully that Mrs. Nyack, unable to bear more, gave a wild shriek and fell unconscious over

the table. Louisa and May gave one horrified and disgusted glance at each other. Then Louisa clawed at Joe's throat, as the only available spot of attack where she could hope to weaken his grip on his father, and May, catching a pail of water from the kitchen sink, threw it impartially over all of them. By this time the clamor had risen to such a height that the neighbors were collecting outside the door.

'Help! Help!' screamed May, ready to fly into hysterics herself, as she saw that the soot and water between them had effectually devastated the green sandals for all time.

A crowd of neighbors pushed the door open at this cry, and Joe, his ardor somewhat cooled by the water and by the presence of the newcomers, rose sulkily to his feet. His father, after some preliminary grunts and snorts, did the same. In the shame-faced silence which followed, May elbowed her way through the crowd and into the street.

'It's the last night I spend with these devils,' she called back to Louisa.

She marched out holding her head very high, conscious that the bystanders were tittering slightly over the mixture of soot and green dye with which she was plastered. She knew a place where she could go and fix herself up, and a fellow who

would give her some swell shoes. She had been shy about taking favors from him before, especially since she preferred Bud. But any place but home was the way she now felt, and any source for shoes since her new ones had been ruined. What did anything matter after such humiliation?

'I'm through with the damned hole myself,' muttered Joe, as he slouched out of the door in the wake of his sister.

Once in the street he turned in a different direction, toward the freight yards. He, too, knew where he could go.

Louisa, being the eldest, felt some slight responsibility toward her mother until she at least recovered speech, and toward her father until she was sure that he would not be arrested. As for May or Joe, she knew from her own experience that they would take no advice from her, so she let them alone. When her parents had both recovered themselves enough to sit up and explain matters volubly to the neighbors, Louisa gave a slight shrug of disgust at the unclean room suddenly become abhorrent to her, and slipped quietly out of the back door.

The aluminum-kettle raffles did not turn out very well. One thing led to another until Louisa and the manager of the enterprise were obliged

to flee from the State together to escape the law. They did not come back. Neither did Joe. He sends out-of-the-way postcards to his mother from time to time. He seems to be in the navy, but his mother is not sure. She has not seen him since that night.

As for May, she calls on her mother now and then with very handsome shoes and stockings, and she gives her parents a substantial present every Christmas.

They cannot understand where she gets the money and they shake their heads over the vague accounts which she gives of herself. But what can they do? They are glad to get the presents, for they need the money, and they are much too humbled by their children to dare to ask any inconvenient questions. The Battle of Bosworth Field was lost to King Richard, they tell us, all for the want of a horseshoe nail. The Battle of the Nyacks was lost by all parties to the conflict. None came out victorious. And why? Because all of the combatants were much too tired to be reasonable at seven P.M.

XVII
JUST LIKE STEVE

JUST LIKE STEVE

Education is the sum of the qualities acquired through individual instruction and social training. All education consists of habit-formation, and begins so young that in most cases people continue to live according to their earliest nurture and ideals. Successful teachers are those who capture the admiration of their followers, and who teach them when their mental development is ripe for their instruction. The fact that their teaching may be vicious in no way impairs its efficacy. The traditions of anti-social conduct are passed on by the same educational technique which operates in the soundest training.

XVII

JUST LIKE STEVE

THE brains in the Boushka family came by way of Mike, who, with his wife and two children, migrated to try his fortunes in the New World. But Mike soon succumbed to American industry in its tubercular form, taking his brains with him, and leaving in the person of his widow as ineffective a guardian for Mamie and Nicky as ever a man selected for his children. Mrs. Boushka's one flash of good judgment was to send for Mike's old mother, from whom he had presumably inherited his ability, and she, pathetically pleased still to be of use in the world, kept the house for the family and two roomers, leaving few duties for the younger woman but to sit heavily by and collect the room rent. Granny did what bringing-up of the children she could in the intervals of her housework, but, knowing nothing of the language, or of any customs but those of a Slavish village, her discipline was not very effective, and Mamie and Nicky played in the alleys like young outlaws, teasing their heavy-eyed mother into fretful scoldings, and dazzling old

Granny with their knowledge of the world. It is not very good for a girl of fifteen and a boy of thirteen to be brought up solely by a lazy mother, an overworked grandmother, and a neighborhood gang, and the effect of this training on their behavior was about what one would expect.

It had even penetrated Mrs. Boushka's sleepy intelligence that something had better be done with Mamie or she would get them into trouble. Boys, she felt, could take care of themselves. Mrs. Boushka sat by the kitchen table on which were stacked the dishes of the day, ready for Mamie to wash when she came home from school. Granny crouched on the woodbox resting her old bones after collecting kindlings down by the packing-houses.

'Where are the kids?' inquired their mother. 'School oughtta been out long ago. Mamie oughtta be here washing them dishes.'

'She'd rather sit in school reading the books than come home and do dirty work. Fine ladies don't like it,' cackled the old lady.

'Sure. That's what comes of schoolin',' agreed Mrs. Boushka. 'Readin' and writin'. What does she read? And what does she write? She'd oughtta get married. Kids like Mamie are better off married — she's most sixteen.'

Granny agreed with some misgivings. 'But girls don't want husbands like they used to. A husband don't want a book-reader. He wants a cook, and Mamie can't cook. Mr. Lusky here, he likes a good soup.'

Mrs. Boushka nodded—'But he likes Mamie too. He's got a good cigar-store. Mamie could sell cigars. What you think, Granny?'

Granny paused with still further misgivings, and then answered what she knew was the real, and not the apparent, question. 'Girls like the young fellas. They don't like old boys like Lusky. I used to like the young fellas.' She leaned back and chuckled in toothless reminiscence. 'Remember young Timothy, him that used to thresh on old Nikos's threshing floor? Timothy's father and grandfather, they *were* young fellas, those fellas were! The girls don't know what young fellas are nowadays. Well! Well! Well!' she clucked to herself, 'Lusky's all right,'—at which point the door opened and the stout proprietor of the cigar-store, of whom they spoke, entered, sat down with his hat on, and his collar off, and asked where Mamie was.

The two women winked at each other.

'Never too old to love!' shrieked the old lady.

'Mamie's a good kid, ain't she?' simpered Lusky. 'And I ain't so old.' He pushed up his sleeve and exhibited his biceps, at which all of them laughed loudly, utterly ignoring the appearance of Steve, the other roomer, who had also entered in the meantime and seated himself in the remaining chair. His presence was plainly not wanted. He was young, on the pattern of what is known popularly as a 'sheik,' and he and his landlady and Lusky exchanged glances of mutual disgust.

'Sure, Mamie's a good kid,' Steve observed, joining unasked into the conversation. 'Too good for an old sport like you.'

Mrs. Boushka glared at this intruder into her plans. 'You gotta job yet?' she asked icily. 'I'll need the room rent on Friday.'

'You'll get it, don't you worry,' Steve answered with a contemptuous gesture.

'I don't know where *you* get it,' answered Mrs. Boushka, shrugging her shoulders. 'Mr. Lusky here, *he's* got a good business. You don't need Mamie in your store, do you?' she asked, turning to Lusky. 'Mamie's good in school. She can write and figure swell.'

'Sure, I need a smart young kid in the store. I was going to ask about Mamie' — at which

point the door opened and both children burst in shouting with laughter.

They danced around the room shrieking with excitement, and dragging after them what turned out to be chickens on the end of two strings. Mamie with a gray chicken capered after Nicky with a black one, and the adults stared in uncomprehending astonishment as the chickens were dragged around the table, till old Granny threw up her apron and began to laugh.

'Little bandits! I've seen them steal geese that way in the mountains and get shot for it too. Granny'll make a stew for the little bandits.'

Steve, grasping the game, gave an appreciative snort, but to Lusky and Mrs. Boushka the matter had to be explained.

'We didn't steal 'em,' said Nicky; 'we just dragged our strings with corn on the end, and it ain't our fault, is it, if they got greedy and swallowed 'em? You'd oughtta seen them come stepping along when they'd swallowed the corn and we pulled the strings.' And the two children goose-stepped ludicrously in imitation of the hapless chickens so that even the slow-witted Lusky was obliged to laugh.

'I'll put a bay leaf in the stew,' cackled Granny.

'And an onion,' advised Lusky.

'Who asked you to eat our stew? They're *our* chickens,' answered Mamie pertly; adding with a shy glance, 'Steve can have some of my chicken.' This under the circumstances was, of course, a most unfortunate remark to make.

Mrs. Boushka leaned over and twitched Mamie's arm angrily. 'You give that chicken to Granny and you wash them dishes,' she snapped. 'Mamie's a good little housekeeper,' she explained eagerly, turning to Lusky. 'But girls are silly and need some one to handle them.'

It was plain enough to her audience whose handling she considered would be suitable for Mamie. Lusky assumed a self-conscious air, Mamie's color heightened, and she turned her back saucily on her elderly admirer as she went at the dishes. Steve gave the company a cynical glance, and even Granny looked uncomfortable. She and her friends had all been married as a matter of course at sixteen, and to older men of means, instead of young ne'er-do-wells, if such a match could be managed by their elders. She had no logical complaint against her daughter-in-law, if she pursued the same method which had united her to the excellent Mike. Nevertheless, a vague presentiment told the old lady, whose feelings were fairly acute, that the system would not work

with Mamie as it had worked with her, and that her granddaughter would not relinquish her hold upon the Steves of her day, as she herself had dutifully bade farewell to the Timothys of her own.

The awkward pause was broken by Steve — 'I seen something like that chicken stunt in a show. A Rube turn it was.'

'That's where I seen it,' giggled Nicky, looking doubtfully at his mother. 'That's why I tried it.'

'You taking good money to go to shows?' snapped his exasperated mother.

'I didn't take no money,' explained Nicky. 'I just takes a pillow, and I walks up to the office and I says, "Properties wanted for the stage," I says. And the fella let me in, and then I took the pillow up to the front and sat on it and saw the show.'

Steve burst into a shout of laughter, in which the others joined, especially Granny, when it had been explained to her.

She chuckled gayly over her grandson's cleverness. 'Granny's little bandit. Like his father, always up to tricks. I wish we had some sauerkraut to go with the chickens,' she mused on from her woodbox, busily picking the feathers from the captured fowls as she spoke.

'I'll get you some,' shouted Nicky, starting up, eager for fresh outlets for his energy.

'We ain't got no money for sauerkraut,' answered his mother, still out of sorts.

'I don't need no money, and I won't steal it either. I thought up a way,' returned Nicky, rummaging in the cupboard for an old knife as he spoke.

Steve looked him over critically and took out a silver dollar. 'I bet you one simoleon you don't get no kraut without paying for it, or without getting caught.'

'I bet I do!' shouted Nicky, running out of the door with no further interference from his mother. The sight of a dollar always exercised a wonderfully quieting effect upon her scruples.

'If Nicky's going somewhere, I'm going, too,' announced Mamie, thoroughly sick of her desultory dish-washing. 'I bet he's going to another show, and it ain't fair, with me washing dishes.'

'Wantta go to a show?' asked Lusky with surprising briskness. 'I'll take you to a show.'

'I don't want to go to a show with you,' returned Mamie, paying no heed to her mother's darkening looks. 'I want to dance in a show myself' — with which remark, she began to dance in the midst of the group, waving her dish towel

like a scarf, and whining, 'Where's my sweetie hiding?' through her nose in the best vaudeville style.

Both men watched her with interest, and then Steve, in defiance of his hostile audience, rose and joined her in 'jazz' dips and posturing, ignoring the jealous and uneasy glances of Mr. Lusky, and the angry gaze of Mrs. Boushka, until the latter rose from her chair and snatched Mamie away from him.

'You let go o' my kid, teachin' all this foolishness and the same to Nicky. You pay your room rent, and you get out. You're no good. Mamie'll be glad to go to a show with you, Mr. Lusky,' she added, somewhat lamely, and, shoving Mamie ahead of her with a disgusted push, she left the kitchen, slamming the door behind her. Presently the wail, 'Gran—ny! Gran—ny!' was heard in Mamie's voice from the rear, and old Granny left her chicken-picking, and hobbled grunting after them to play her usual rôle of impartial chairman in the Boushka family.

The two men were now left alone in the kitchen. Each sat tilted back in his chair, his hat resting on his neck, and stared ahead in surly silence.

This was finally broken by Lusky, who remarked, 'You act flush with your dollars all right.'

To this Steve snapped, 'What's it *to* you?'

'And you don't work for it neither. I have to work for *my* money,' Lusky went on.

'Selling cigars ain't work — a kid can do it,' sneered Steve.

'What you know about it?' returned Lusky angrily, stung into defense of his business ability.

'I know enough to know you don't get the trade,' answered Steve. 'Ever thought of trying a few poker tables in the back of your place, to attract customers?'

'I'm going to get Mamie down in my store. She's a pretty kid. She'll attract customers,' was Lusky's flat announcement.

'Nicky'd do you more good than Mamie,' answered Steve, jingling his keys reflectively. 'Mamie'd get the fellas in the store all right, but how d'you know she'd sell 'em cigars? A girl don't have to. She can get her shows and her joy-rides without selling cigars. Nicky'd go in the business and make money for *you*. Mamie'd make it for herself; she wouldn't be in business for *your* health, and don't you forget it.' Lusky stirred a bit uneasily at this. 'Are you thinking of marrying the kid and giving her the legal right to waste your money? No fool like an old fool,' persisted Steve.

'None o' your business who I marry,' rejoined Lusky with a sulky shrug.

Steve leaned over to him eagerly. 'See here, Lusky. You leave Mamie alone, and I'll help you to a thing or two with Nicky. He's a smart kid. Look at what he gets away with. Get him trained, and ya got a business man. Get Mamie trained, and what ya got?'

'I got Mamie,' chuckled Lusky with a leer.

'No, ya ain't. Not on your life you ain't got Mamie,' rejoined Steve quickly. 'Married or unmarried, you ain't got Mamie except her upkeep. Girls chase around with the young guys, and don't you forget it. An old boy like you would just pay her overhead.'

'Well, what's your idea about Nicky?' inquired Lusky, reluctant, but uneasy over the picture of a young spendthrift wife.

'I could teach Nicky a good poker game. They learn quick when they're young. I learned younger than him myself,' explained Steve.

'What good's it done ya if ya did?' demanded Lusky, thinking that he had now made a point.

Steve looked behind him, lit a cigarette with elaborate nonchalance, and drew a hard wad of bills from his pocket. He smoothed them out,

counted them before Lusky's fascinated eyes, and replaced them in his pocket. 'Fifty berries. Not so bad for one evening, eh?' he commented while Lusky continued to stare in a dazzled fashion at the pocket where the bills had disappeared. 'You'd come in on a percentage basis,' Steve volunteered. 'I'd teach him, and fix it up with you. Nothing phoney about it. Play one jump ahead of the other guys, is all you have to do, and Nicky could, all right. He's full of tricks already. Hear him laughing out there? I bet his gag worked.'

At this point Nicky burst into the room shouting, 'Granny! Where's Granny?' — and as he shouted, he waved a carton of sauerkraut in the air. His commotion brought the rest of the family peering through the door, and Nicky went on hilariously: 'I got the kraut at Tony's delicatessen, and I didn't steal it, and I didn't buy it, and Steve owes me a dollar, don't you, Steve? See! This is how I got it.' And from his pocket he produced an angleworm, which he laid elaborately on the table, his auditors backing off in some alarm from its unexpected appearance. 'See through it, Steve?' giggled Nicky, waltzing around the table and ecstatically poking his worm.

'You sure got *me*, kid,' confessed Steve. 'I seen trained dogs and wise birds in my time, but an angleworm with a college education is a new one. How's it done?'

The method, as volubly explained by Nicky, turned out to be simple but effective. He had ordered a quart of sauerkraut, and, while Tony's back was turned, had inserted the worm he had just dug. This, he had exhibited in righteous indignation to the owner of the delicatessen, and with a grand air had walked out, threatening to tell the owner of the rival store of the undesirable character of his wares. To purchase his silence, the distracted shopkeeper had pressed upon him a quart of fresh sauerkraut as a gift, and promised to empty out his kraut tubs and purchase further supplies from a more reliable dealer.

Steve listened delightedly to this recital, flipped the dollar over to Nicky, and remarked to Lusky in an undertone, 'What did I tell ya? Ain't he got the bean on him?' Then to Nicky: 'Wantta learn a game? A game the big guys play?' — and at Nicky's delighted assent, he drew up his chair, took a pack of cards and some chips out of his pocket, and began to explain the principles of draw poker to his young disciple. 'You know what a flush is, don't you, Nicky? And three of a

kind? That beats two pair' — and he illustrated by laying out his cards on the table.

'Sure,' said Nicky. 'I seen 'em play that game down to Grogan's, lots o' times.' He hung over the table breathing excitedly while Steve gave further instructions, deftly shuffled the cards, and dealt them for a trial game.

Mamie looked over Steve's shoulder, Granny picked her chickens industriously, and Lusky and Mrs. Boushka gazed heavily on, disapproving, but nevertheless profoundly impressed by Steve's dollar so carelessly bestowed.

'I want three,' shouted Nicky. Then, 'I raise ya, Steve, I raise ya five.'

'Listen to the kid bluffing,' chuckled Steve to Lusky. 'All right. I call ya, kid. Show your hand.'

Nicky shouted with laughter, exhibited a full house, and swept in the chips. 'See what I had, Steve? See what I had, Granny? He thought I didn't have nothing, and I trimmed him.'

Steve laughed and turned to Lusky: 'Did ya ever see the beat of that kid?' he asked as he redealt.

Nicky began to giggle as he peered at his cards. 'Raise ya ten, Steve.'

'Is it beginner's luck, or are ya bluffing me?'

asked Steve, looking keenly at him, as he laid down twenty chips.

Nicky called, drew two cards, and with a flushed face shoved all his chips into the center of the table.

'All right, I guess ya caught 'em,' admitted Steve, hesitating slightly. 'Take the pot, but let's see what ya got, kid.'

Nicky began to shriek, and dance around the room. 'Didn't have nothin' but one pair. Bluffed Steve and got the pot! Bluffed Steve and got the pot!' — and he rushed to old Granny and hugged her. The others looked on doubtfully at these mysterious proceedings, and Steve murmured: 'He's got a poker face already. Even bluffed me. Better have that kid in your business, Lusky. He'd skin the hide off an elephant.'

Suddenly Mamie ran to the door. 'It sounds like little Sadie Sokol cryin' out there,' she exclaimed. 'What's the matter with Sadie?' — and she ushered in a very forlorn little girl, who was crying dismally.

'I lost my black chicken,' Sadie sobbed. 'My little pet chicken. He was so cute, and I guess the dogs got him. I liked my chicken better than anything in the world,' she wailed on Mamie's shoulder.

At this tragedy the room suddenly became very still. Old Granny stopped her busy occupation and tried to spread her apron over the disorder on the floor. Nicky's wild joy over his successful game was instantly checked, and he stood frozen with alarm and regret. Mamie managed to combine sympathy with discretion, by throwing her arms around Sadie and making her turn her back to the woodbox and its incriminating evidence.

'I'll get you another chicken,' promised Nicky eagerly, when he could collect himself.

'My father says it's no use, the dogs get 'em.'

'Then I'll get you a dog,' cried Nicky, even more enthusiastic; but Sadie's head shook in despair.

'I liked this little chicken so much. He followed me around, and everything,' she sobbed.

Mamie was almost in tears herself by this time, and, with her arms around the sorrowing Sadie, went out with her, while Nicky watched them ruefully and then cast his eyes around the room in meditation. In the corner stood two fire extinguishers. Toward these he marched, picked them up, and started out the door with them.

'Where ya going, kid?' asked Steve.

'I'm goin' to get Sadie a chicken,' answered Nicky stoutly.

'Don't you shoot chickens with that truck you got and get us into trouble,' warned his mother.

'I ain't goin' to shoot no chickens,' he assured her, and trudged out of the door.

Steve turned to the group apologetically: 'I would have paid for the kid's chicken, but I want to see what Nicky will do. He's made for big business, that kid is.'

'He's made to be a crook,' declared Lusky, suddenly rousing.

'That's just what I say,' agreed Steve. 'He's made for business on a large scale. It pays little fellas like you to be honest. The big boys don't have to be. He'll be busting Wall Street some day, that kid will.'

'It's not such good business to pay for a chicken when you don't have to,' returned Lusky grumpily.

'Oh, well,' laughed Steve, 'every guy has his weakness. Even the biggest of them don't like to see the girls cry. Sometimes it takes more than a chicken to stop them, but the idea's the same.'

But Mr. Lusky had been thinking his slow thoughts while all this was going on, and had decided that it would not do to have a business partner who was quite so sharp. 'He might pick

the cash drawer. I'd rather have Mamie,' he announced suddenly.

'Sure you would,' agreed Mrs. Boushka in a relieved tone. 'Mamie'd work swell for you, Mr. Lusky.'

'Ain't I told you to keep your hands off Mamie?' snarled Steve, fiercely, half rising from his chair. 'Are you going to let that cute little girl sell tobacco to a bunch of bums in that old fool's store?' he asked, turning to her mother.

'I figure to marry Mamie,' went on Mr. Lusky imperturbably.

Mrs. Boushka rose with an alacrity she had not hitherto shown. 'Mamie'll be pleased to marry you, Mr. Lusky,' she said delightedly. 'She'll make a good little wife.'

Steve confronted them. 'I'll see you all in hell first!' he shouted, showing his teeth.

'He wants her himself,' went on the star roomer, gazing at vacancy.

'You're a crook, get out of my house!' screamed Mrs. Boushka.

'If I'm a crook, I know it, and that's more than you can say,' shouted Steve. 'Marrying off that cute kid to old Jumbo! If it comes to buying her, I can pay more than he can. How much do you want for her?' — and he took his wad of bills

from his pocket and began counting them off to Mrs. Boushka, who gazed at the money speechless, while Mr. Lusky looked on in growing uneasiness.

At this point the door opened abruptly, and a policeman entered shoving Nicky in front of him. Nicky was trying to look very independent and manly, but his furtive glances at Steve implored him for some cue as to how he was to meet this new emergency.

'Here's your kid trying to make out he's the agent for fire extinguishers stolen out of Casey's barber shop,' said the officer. 'There's been a good many complaints, and it looks like Nicky was the thief. Can't you raise your kids? What'd you steal 'em for, Nicky?' he asked, shaking the boy slightly by the shoulder.

'I had to have the money,' answered Nicky after a pause, hanging down his head.

'What for?'

'To buy a present,' was the still more embarrassed reply.

'A kid sweetheart, hey? What she stick you for? A diamond tyrara?' laughed the policeman.

'She wanted a hen,' answered Nicky, too distressed for the moment to do anything but tell the truth.

'A hen!' shouted the policeman, and threw back his head for a laugh, when his eye happened to fall on poor scared Granny vainly trying to hide the chicken feathers behind the woodbox. He walked over, kicked them with his foot, and then rummaging among the kindlings he produced the ill-fated black chicken partly plucked, and held it up accusingly. 'It looks like one of old Sokol's hens. He said his kid was crying like hell because she lost it. So you pinched the wrong hen, hey? and then tried to sell stolen goods to pay her back? Is that it?' he asked Nicky.

'It's that fella who teaches him wrong!' screamed Mrs. Boushka, pointing at Steve. 'I bet he stole them things himself, and got Nicky to sell 'em. That's what I bet'—and she shook her fist in Steve's face.

Steve nodded. 'She's right. That's what I did,' he said quietly to the policeman.

A blank silence fell on the room. The entire Boushka family gazed at Steve with dropping jaws. Lusky's face relaxed in a contented smile, but Mamie and Nicky's astonishment melted into adoration as they edged toward their hero, now doubly dear.

The policeman stared at Steve incredulously. 'You and I ain't strangers, Steve,' he said, 'an'

you've been up to plenty of meanness. But a coupla tin cans out of a barber shop ain't your style of graft. It's hard to believe it of you. Did he steal 'em, Nicky?'

Nicky gazed at Steve without answering. He did not know what his idol wanted him to say.

'Sure I stole 'em, and got you to peddle 'em, and don't you forget it,' interposed Steve. 'I'll tell that to the judge. He'll believe it fast enough,' he added, with some bitterness, to the policeman.

As the two men moved toward the door, Nicky, who could bear the strain no longer, ran after them. 'He didn't steal 'em!' he cried. 'I stole 'em myself. You know I did. You stay here and take care of Mamie.' He threw himself on Steve's arm dragging him back, and Mamie flung her arms around his neck sobbing convulsively.

But Mrs. Boushka snatched a child with each hand and dragged them back, shaking them roughly.

Steve nodded to the officer. 'I stole the fire-killers. Don't you worry. But this kid's right to be scared about his sister. Don't let 'em marry her off to that old stiff while I'm gone, will ya? It's only the workhouse, Mamie,' he called to the girl. 'I'll come back and marry ya, I promise ya I will.'

'Swell husband you'd make,' remarked the policeman with a laugh.

'As good as that fat alligator they're wishing onto her,' rejoined Steve, flushing hotly. 'If he lays a damned finger on her, I'll blow up his tobacco joint and him in it. Except for Granny, I'm the only friend these kids 'a' got, and they know it.'

'Then they're sure outta luck,' remarked the policeman dryly; adding with more kindness, 'I don't see through your game, but I'll look after the kids. I promise you that.'

'I can look after my own kids,' was Mrs. Boushka's furious parting shot. 'He's a thief, and I won't let my kids be like him.'

'No, I don't advise any kids to be like me,' was Steve's bitter response as the door closed.

Mamie had in the meantime torn herself from her mother, and she and Nicky clung to each other in the middle of the room.

'Don't cry, Mamie,' comforted Nicky. 'He'll come back.'

'He'd better not!' shouted their mother.

'He's a dirty bum,' commented Lusky as he tilted back comfortably in his chair.

'He is not. He's the swellest fella I know,' sobbed Mamie in a hot defense.

'He's a crook,' pursued Lusky, cocking his derby over one eye, but otherwise unmoved.

'Well, if he's a crook, then I wantta be a crook,' announced Nicky. 'He's the best guy in the world. When I grow up, I'm goin' to be — just — like — Steve!'

THE END

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